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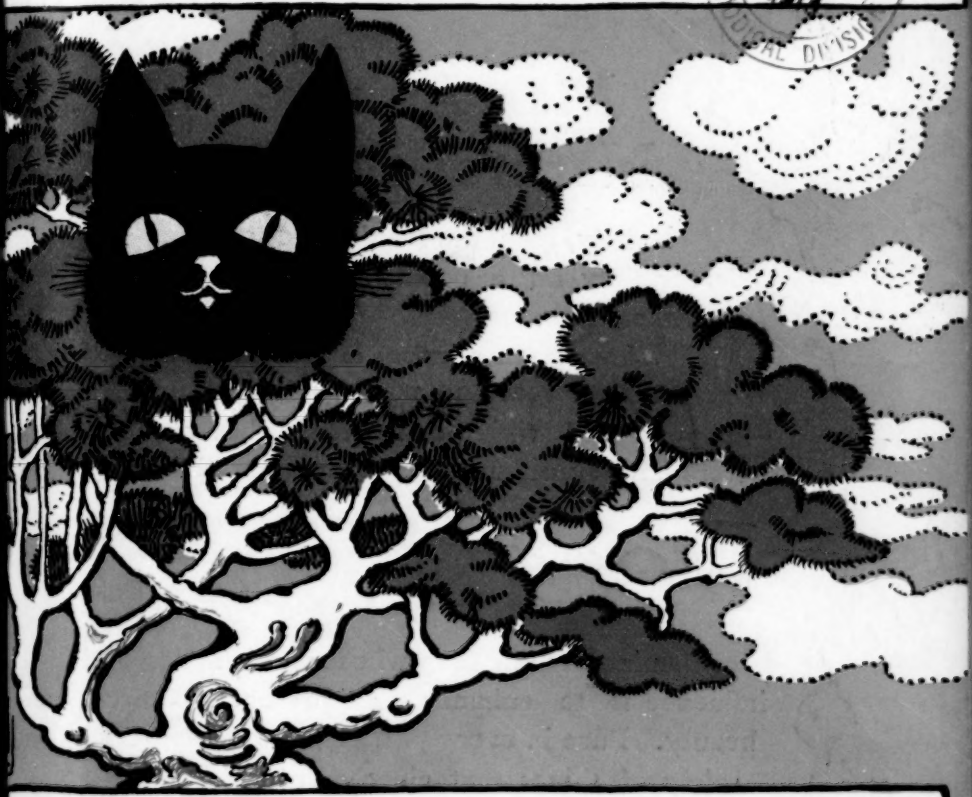

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The Ghost That Came Back

N. S. E.

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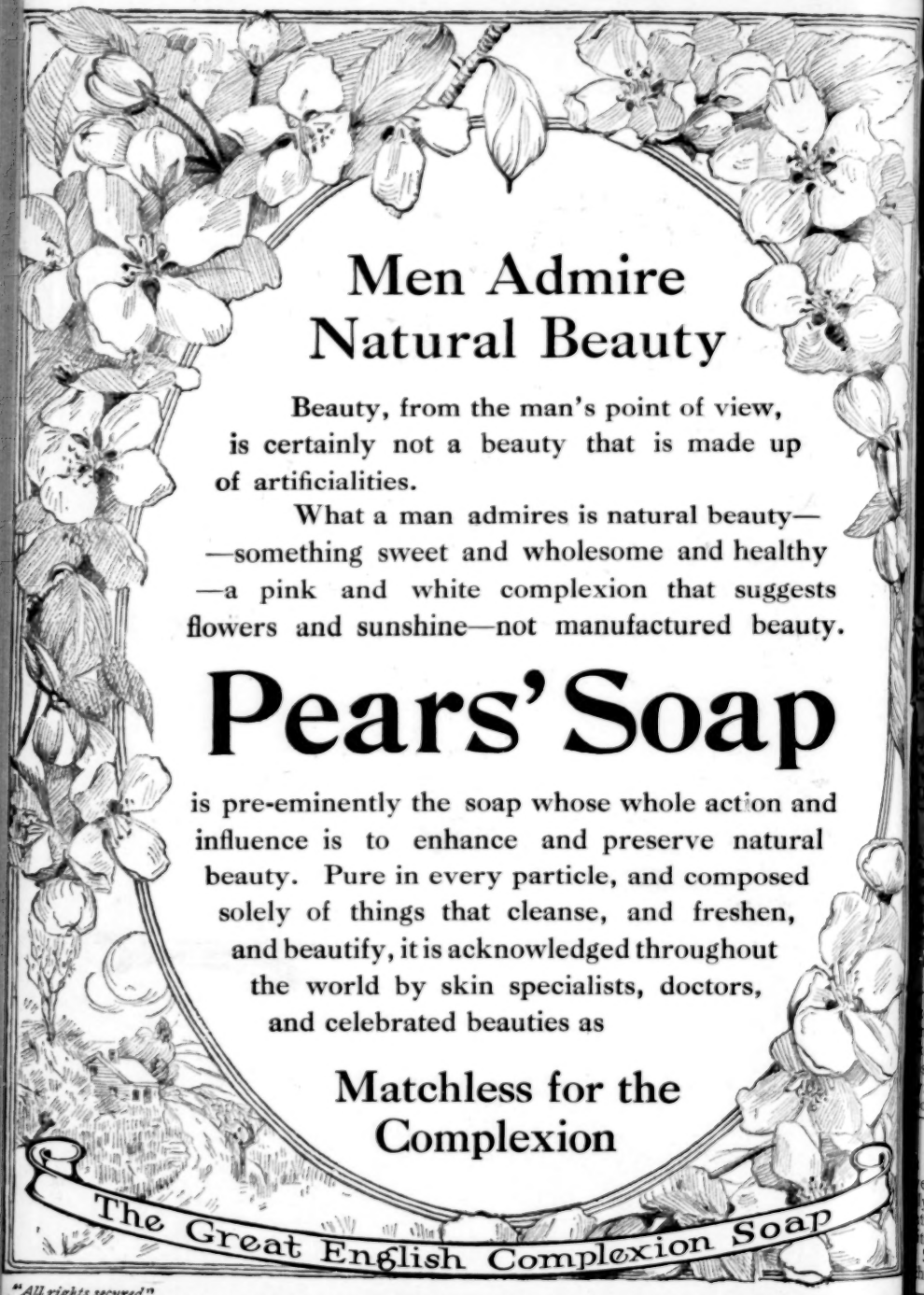

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The Black Cat

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The Ghost That Came Back*

BY HOWARD DWIGHT SMILEY

HE won't do it, 'Suicide'," said the boss as he pulled up alongside the chuck wagon, where the cook was anxiously awaiting him.

He dismounted and stood with one hand on the pommel of the saddle while he faced the other and continued in a mournful tone.

"I done eat four orders of ham and aigs just to prolong the argument with Sadie, but she's as obdurate as a she-mule in a Chocktaw blizzard. Couldn't move her nohow."

The boss began unsaddling his pony, and Suicide Jones turned sadly away, walked to the wagon and drew out his war-bag, and then retired to the seclusion of a bunch of mesquite bushes about one hundred yards from the camp.

Two cowpunchers, squatted by the camp fire, watched him go with expressions of bored resignation.

"Done gone to make his will again," commented Highwater Jenkins dryly. "Going to hang himself again tonight."

"He sure is," agreed the boss, who had approached the fire after turning out his horse. "He'll do it in dead earnest, this time, too."

The others looked up in surprise as the boss sat down and reached for a coal to light his cigarette.

"You going to let him do it?" asked Rawhide Billings.

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"He'll sure wake up in Hades, this time," chuckled the boss.

The others looked incredulous.

"You going to let us lose a good cook?" asked Highwater.

"Going to save one," answered the boss, still chuckling.

Highwater snorted indignantly. "What for you talking thataway, Billy?" he demanded. "Cain't you explain yourself? You ain't going to let Suicide go to work and kill himself deliberate, without no interfering, are you?"

"No, not exactly," admitted the boss. "Just mighty nigh. So close he'll think he's sure connected up with the real thing."

Suicide Jones came out of the clump of mesquite and called across the open.

"Say you, Highwater, what size boots you wear?" he wanted to know.

"Nines and a half," shouted Highwater promptly. "How many times have I got to tell you, Suicide, that your boots is too small. I won't wear no dead man's boots anyhow."

Suicide retired into the mesquite again.

"Wills me his boots every time he hangs himself," grumbled Highwater. "What you aiming to do this time, Billy?" he asked the boss.

"I met up with a fellow in Abilene last night who's plumb interesting," began the boss in a low tone. "He's waiting table at the 'Last Chance,' along with Sadie, the biscuit shooter Suicide's stuck on. Heard me argying with her to come along out here and get married and keep our cook in the family, and after supper he looked me up on the hotel veranda and we got to talking.

"Seems he's an actor man. Owns a show troop that has gone broke in Abilene. He's waiting table to pay off his hotel bill and raise enough dust to carry himself and troop of six more to Phoenix. Rest of the troop are chamber-maiding or hoss-wrangling to keep down expenses, but it looked like they was stuck there indefinitely.

"After I'd explained to him how Suicide was eating his heart out over Sadie and hanging himself on an average of every other day, 'count of being rejected so numerous, and being cut down by one or the other of us just in time to save his fool life, this fellow got real interested, and it ain't no time at all before he hits on a scheme that's plumb comical and effective. I'm paying him a hundred dollars to put it through."

"Ain't that a lot of money to waste on that old maverick?" asked Highwater.

"Suicide pays for it," chuckled the boss. "He's got three months back-pay coming, which he won't need after he's dead; amounts to a

hundred and twenty dollars; so you see I'm making good money, not counting funeral expenses."

"Wish you'd tell me what you're driving at," growled Highwater.

"It seems that the show this troop plays is called 'Faust,' and this fellow plays the part of Mephist—something or other—I don't know how they say it, anyhow it's short for the Devil. Looks it, too. Took me up to his room and put on his war paint and he was sure a dead ringer for Old Nick himself. I got him cached down in Dead Hoss Canyon now, along with another member of the troop and a wagon load of stage scenery."

"You have!" exclaimed Highwater. "What for?"

"Going to cure Suicide," answered the boss. "We got it all figured out. You know where Moaning Cave is, down there in the canyon? Well, we're going to pull the stunt off in there. Suicide ain't never seen it. It'll sure be plumb funny."

"Here he comes," warned Rawhide, as the cook emerged from the mesquite, warbag in hand, and approached the group around the fire.

"Now you fellows keep still," admonished the boss. "There ain't nothing to do now except wait until he hangs himself."

Suicide stowed his warbag in the wagon and then went gloomily about preparing a belated supper. While he was doing this, three more cowpunchers rode in, and Highwater and Rawhide went out to catch their ponies to go on night duty.

They ate their suppers hastily for they were already late, and as they rose to go, the cook called them to one side, out of hearing of the others.

"Boys," he said brokenly, "I done got a hunch that I ain't going to see you no more, and I sort o' wanted to bid you good bye. You done been good friends to me and I ain't forgot you in my will."

He extended his hand and the cowpunchers shook it gravely, and then he turned and walked tearfully out onto the prairie, while the others went to their ponies, where the boss was awaiting them.

"Reckon them critters 'll have to herd themselves tonight for a spell," he whispered. "You fellows listen and when you hear me shoot, you come rollicking in. I'm going to need you in pulling off this stunt."

They rode away and the boss returned to the fire and sat down with the day herders who were smoking moodily before the blaze.

Suicide washed the supper dishes and put things in order and then came over to the fire and silently shook hands with all present. He had evidently intended saying something, but choked on his words and gave it up. Gathering his warbag and blankets from the wagon

he moved some distance from the others and rolled up, ostensibly to go to sleep.

Plug Miller drew out his knife and cut a notch in the left leg of his leather chaps, and counted.

"Seventeen," he informed the others. "Seventeen times that chinook has gone and committed suicide and been rescued, all on account of a dog-gone, red-headed biscuit shooter, who won't have him. He ain't worth all this bothering with, Billy."

"Darn good cook," argued the boss. "Don't know where we're going to get another if he passes in his checks. Now you fellows roll up and keep still and give him plenty of rope. I got a hunch that this is his last hanging."

An hour later Suicide cautiously raised his head and peered about. The fire had died down to a few glowing embers, but it was bright starlight and objects were fairly discernible. He could see the huddled forms of his companions, apparently fast asleep.

Silently he threw off his blankets, sat up, and reached for his warbag. First, he drew forth a folded paper which he pinned to one of his blankets. Then he took out a horse-hair riata, rose to his feet, tip-toed to the wagon where he picked up an empty soap box, and then stole off into the night.

About one hundred yards away stood a lone cottonwood tree. Suicide placed the soap box under this, mounted it, and deftly made a hangman's noose in one end of the riata. This he adjusted about his neck, securely tied the other end of the rope to the limb overhead, and then, everything in readiness, he gave one farewell look at the surrounding scenery and swung loose, kicking the box from under him.

Around the end of the chuck wagon filed the boss and the three day herders. They hurried to the cottonwood tree and Plug Miller drew out his knife and was about to cut the riata when the boss stopped him.

"Wait till he stops dancing," he whispered. "Got to bust him wide open this time."

Suicide was kicking feebly and rapidly strangling to death. The boss waited until all movement had stopped, then mounted the soap box and untied the rope about the limb and gently lowered the cook's body to the ground.

"Now a couple of you fellows catch Molly and hitch her to the buckboard, *pronto*," he instructed.

Two of the cowpunchers hurried away, leaving Plug with the boss. The latter shot his six-shooter into the air to summon Highwater and

Rawhide, and then drew a bottle from his pocket and squatted over the form of Suicide.

Plug loosened the noose, and the cook was gasping feebly and showing signs of returning consciousness. The boss poured some of the contents from the bottle onto his handkerchief and applied it to the cook's nose.

"Chloroform," he told the inquiring Plug. "Got to keep him dead for a spell."

Highwater and Rawhide arrived about the same time as the buckboard, and as soon as he had them all together the boss hurriedly explained his plans, to the huge delight of everybody.

They loaded the slumbering cook into the buckboard, and the boss drove off with him towards Dead Hoss Canyon, while the others followed on their ponies.

* * * * * * *

Suicide Jones awoke in Stygian darkness. He was shivering with cold, his head ached, and he felt nauseated. As a vent for his feelings he emitted a loud dismal groan.

The result startled him into instant wakefulness. That groan echoed and reverberated in a manner that was truly terrifying. Suicide sat up with a gasp.

"Where in the hotel am I at?" he asked himself.

A peal of demoniacal laughter answered the query and fetched a yell of terror from the unfortunate cook.

Then the thunder rolled, the lightning flashed, and the merry demons howled!

Suicide sat transfixed, his hands clutching the air, his hair on end, and his eyes popping from his head.

From somewhere in the distance a red light flared up and diffused through a chamber that Suicide felt certain was not of this world. He looked about in terror; he seemed to be in a huge cavernous room, through which countless bats were flitting. Huge stalactites hanging from the ceiling and smaller stalagmites rising from the floor all about him, glistened with millions of jewels in the fitful light.

He grasped the situation instantly! He had died and had arrived at the infernal regions!

Before him, seated on a stone throne, was His Satanic Majesty himself, tail, horns, pitchfork and all, complete, and about him was a circle of six white-sheeted figures, who stood grimly on guard.

Suicide struggled to his feet and found himself to be gowned in a

long, flowing, black mother-hubbard, that smelled decidedly of calico.

Satan raised his hand and instantly the thunder died away; then in a hollow voice he addressed the unhappy cook.

"Thomas Suicide Jones," he rumbled. "You stand before the judgment of your just deserts!"

"Yessir!" chattered Suicide, the chills jumping up and down his spine. "Yessir!"

Several of the white-shrouded figures snorted violently, but the cook was too terrified to notice.

Then Old Nick roared:

> "'Sit down, sit down upon the slag, and answer loud and high
> The harm that ye did to the Sons of Man or ever you came to die.'"

Suicide had never read Kipling and was therefore not acquainted with his predecessor to the infernal regions, namely, Mr. Tomlinson, late of Berkeley Square. However, he was no doubt experiencing much the same sensations as did that historic gentleman on his memorable visit to Hell-Mouth Gate.

Suicide sat down upon the slag promptly. The floor was rough and covered with sharp little projections, and the black mother-hubbard was thin, but Suicide sat there, nevertheless.

"Yessir, yessir, your honor," he hastened to say. "I never done nothing to nobody, Sir. I allus been a good man, Sir! I didn't go to commit suicide, Sir! Relied on them fool day herders to cut me down like they allus has done! My friends done failed me, Sir, at the last minute and let me die! I—I done trusted 'em once too often, Sir, and they went back on me, but I didn't go to commit suicide, honest injun I didn't!"

The white-shrouded figures rocked and swayed, while sounds of strangulation came from under the sheets that covered them, but Suicide gave no heed. His entire attention was focused on the gentleman with the horns and tail.

Satan declaimed at great length. He dwelt long on the folly of any one invading the infernal regions ahead of time. There was no place prepared for him. Just because Satan was running this joint, wasn't any sign that he was going to stand for a lot of loose-moraled cahoots that went around hanging themselves on trees, being dumped in on him promiscuous. He wanted it understood that he was running a respectable place, contrary to general reports, and he wasn't going to have a lot of "sooners" loafing around just because they didn't know enough to stay where they belonged. There wasn't

much choice except to heave Suicide into the eternal fires, there to remain until a job was left vacant that he could fill. That seemed to be about the only thing—unless he wanted to go back.

"Go back?" questioned Suicide hopefully.

"Certainly," answered His Majesty. "If you choose, you can return to the scene of your crime and take up your regular job and work out your allotted time—with certain restrictions, of course."

"You mean that I can go back to cooking for the Lazy B outfit?" asked the astonished Suicide.

"Well, not exactly. You'll only *seem* to do the work. It'll be real enough to you, cooking, dish washing, and all, and you'll be able to see your old friends about you, and hear them, and see them eat, but they won't be able to see or hear you. You'll be a ghost, don't you see? Ghosts have regular duties to perform, same as live folks, only with them it's purely imaginary."

"How am I going to cook for the outfit when they can't see or hear me?" asked Suicide.

"You won't. You'll only imagine you cook, but it'll be just as real as if you did cook. You won't even be able to see the men who do the real cooking. Everything will be perfectly natural. But you cannot shirk your duties. You must cook the meals regularly, which your friends will seem to eat, and you must wash the dishes afterwards and perform your other camp duties; you'll do it without pay, too."

"I see," said Suicide. "If I do that, I don't have to be heaved into—into that other place?"

"Exactly. Do you want to go back?"

"Right this minute!" answered Suicide eagerly. "Show me the way!"

"And you understand your duties perfectly?"

"Yessir!"

"You understand that if you fall down, back you come and into the pit you go?"

"Yessir!"

"Ho, Mephisto!" shouted Satan, and a little red devil came capering out from one of the subways of the cave, bearing in his hand a huge, old fashioned goblet, which he presented to Suicide with a low bow.

"Drink that," commanded His Majesty, and without a murmur the cook drained the glass.

The little red devil capered back, and then the light went out, the thunder crashed, the lightning flashed, and the merry demons howled

once more, while Suicide sat down suddenly, his head whirling.

Five minutes later he was sound asleep. He had swallowed a regulation dose of knockout drops.

Divested of their shrouds, the cowpunchers and the boss shook hands enthusiastically with the show men.

"That's sure the funniest stunt I ever seen pulled off," the boss declared.

They carried the sleeping cook out of the cave and placed him in the buckboard, then turned to and helped the show men load their thunder machine and other paraphernalia of the defunct Faust Company onto the wagon.

"Here's your hundred dollars," said the boss, handing the erstwhile Satan a roll of bills. "You've sure earned them. Now you just follow this trail and bear to the right and you'll hit Abilene before daylight. So long, and good luck to you."

* * * * * * *

It was broad daylight when the cook awoke. He was lying under the cottonwood tree, still garbed in the black mother-hubbard, and decidedly chilled.

He got onto his feet slowly and looked about, while the events of the night before buzzed in his brain and struggled for order. From the limb above him dangled the horse-hair riata, with the hangman's noose in the end. Directly below it was a newly sodded grave.

"That's my grave," he told himself. "By cricky! I've done been *there!* There and back again! Gosh!"

He moved over toward the chuck wagon with his long black mother hubbard flopping ludicrously about his ankles. Highwater Jenkins and Rawhide Billings were seated by the fire, talking dejectedly. Suicide approached them hopefully.

"Morning, pards," he ventured timidly.

Neither seemed to hear, but gazed gloomily off across the prairie. Suicide moved around the fire until he was in direct line with Rawhide's vision. The cowpuncher seemed to look straight through him.

Rawhide sighed windily. "It's sure lonesome without poor old Suicide around," he complained. "Breakfast didn't taste right this morning, did she, Hi?"

"I dunno," argued Highwater. "He wasn't what you'd call such a whale of a cook. Leastwise I didn't think so. Flapjacks always sour and coffee muddy. I understand he's got a wife and fourteen small children back East, which he deserted. He done tried to deceive that poor biscuit shooter in Abilene."

"You're a liar and a hoss thief and you eat pie with a knife!" shouted Suicide angrily. The others did not seem to hear.

"That ain't no way to talk about a dead comrade," reproached Rawhide. "Poor old Suicide is dead and in his grave. He had his good qualities, even if he did serve time for hoss stealing, up in Dakota."

"You long-legged, piebald jackrabbit!" yelled the cook. "I never rustled a hoss in my life, and you know it!"

"The only decent thing he ever done in his life was to will that biscuit shooter his hundred and twenty dollars back pay," continued Highwater, as if there had been no interruption.

"The boss ain't going to give it to her," said Rawhide. "Going to keep it to cover funeral expenses, and for Suicide's quitting without notice."

"Is that so!" exclaimed the irate cook. "If Bill Etts thinks he can come anything like that on me, he's got another guess coming! I'll sue him!"

If the others heard, they gave no sign, but continued discussing the unhappy cook in such disparaging terms that they soon had him fairly dancing with rage and grief. At last he turned away in despair.

"I ain't nothing but a dog-gone ghost!" he sobbed aloud. "Just an orn'ry no 'count ghost, what cain't be seen nor heard nor nothing, and bound out to cook vittles and wash dishes forever, for nothing, without even the comfort of committing suicide!"

Rawhide and Highwater found business elsewhere in a hurry, nor did they return until the boss and the rest of the outfit arrived about two hours later. In the meantime Suicide, obedient to Satan's instructions, had washed up the breakfast dishes and was busily engaged in preparing dinner.

No one noticed his presence in the camp, and after the meal, which Rawhide and Highwater insisted that they had cooked, in spite of Suicide's voluble but apparently unheard protestations, the boss walked over to the newly sodded grave under the cottonwood tree and shed copious tears.

"Poor old Suicide," he said, as he returned to the fire. "He willed me his boots and best pants. He was a good old soul, even if he did marry a Piute squaw down in Lower California, which he afterwards deserted."

Whereat Suicide rushed out into the wilderness and wept.

For the next two weeks matters ran very smoothly with the Lazy B outfit. Suicide took up his duties where he had left off, previous

to the hanging, and worked most industriously. After two days and nights of futile effort to make his erstwhile companions hear or see him, he gave up in despair and became moody and taciturn, remaining away by himself when off duty, to avoid hearing personal conversation of post-mortem nature.

This condition of affairs might have continued indefinitely had not the boss and Plug Miller quarreled. Plug received his walking papers and left the camp in a high dudgeon, swearing dire vengeance.

One morning, two days after Plug's departure, Suicide, who was alone in camp, noted the approach of a horse and buckboard, from the direction of Abilene.

As the rig drew nearer the cook saw that the driver was a woman, and retired in much trepidation to the interior of the chuck wagon. Suicide was still garbed in the long black flowing mother-hubbard.

The rig drove up and the driver stepped down. Through the flaps of the chuck wagon Suicide discovered that she was the lady of his dreams, Sadie Denmark, the "Last Chance" biscuit shooter.

Sadie carried a large bunch of wild flowers in her hand, and after hallooing several times without receiving an answer, she walked over to the cottonwood and deposited her bouquet on the grave, drew out a handkerchief and wept.

"Great Cats!" exclaimed Suicide, as he watched her through a rent in the canvas covering of the chuck wagon. He was completely stupefied by this behavior of one whom he had deemed so cold and heartless.

After an interval Sadie returned to the wagon, but did not leave, as Suicide fervently prayed she would. He was nothing now but a shiftless ghost, and it would be useless to renew acquaintances. He had irrefutable proof of his invisibility to mortal eyes, but native modesty kept him from appearing before a lady in that black mother-hubbard.

Sadie was evidently waiting for some one, for she walked about the camp, casting frequent glances out over the prairie, and muttering to herself impatiently. In his efforts to keep an eye on her, Suicide finally succeeded in upsetting a pile of canned goods, which fell to the floor of the wagon with a loud clatter.

At the sound, Sadie turned and gazed wonderingly at the wagon for a moment; then advanced, pulled back the flaps, and peered in, disclosing the dismayed cook huddled in a corner.

Sadie was undoubtedly astonished, but she did not lose her presence of mind.

"What on earth are you doing in there?" she demanded sharply.

Suicide remained silent.

"Can't you talk?" she asked.

"Are you speaking to me?" asked Suicide in an awed tone.

"Certainly I'm talking to you!"

"Can you see me?"

"Of course!"

"And hear me?"

"Yes!"

"Well, I'll be dog-goned!" exclaimed the amazed cook.

"Why shouldn't I hear you?" inquired Sadie.

"I'm dead," Suicide solemnly declared.

"Humph! That's what Plug Miller told me. Said you left me a hundred and twenty dollars in your will. That's what I'm after!"

"You'll have to see the boss," Suicide informed her. "I ain't nothing but a no 'count ghost now, what don't have no money."

"You be? What are you hiding in this wagon for if you're dead? You'd ought to be in a hotter place than this."

"Been there," answered Suicide.

"I don't believe you're any more dead than I am! Come out of there!"

"I'd rather not," said Suicide modestly.

Sadie reached a sinewy arm through the flaps and seized the ghost by his scalp lock and dragged him forth.

"There!" she exclaimed. "Told you, you wasn't dead! What're you trying to fool me this way for?"

"I ain't!" cried the astonished cook. "I believed I was dead, honest injun I did!"

"Plug said you committed suicide 'count of me."

"Did. Leastwise, thought I did. You sure I'm alive?"

"Course you are, you old fool! Didn't you know better than to go committing suicide without first consulting me?"

"Did."

"Didn't either! You sent Bill Etts down to ask me! Don't you know that no lady takes second hand proposals if she's got any respect for herself? The idea!"

"Asked you twicet, myself."

"Well, what if you did? Don't you know it's a woman's privilege to refuse twice and accept on the third proposal? They always do!"

* * * * * * *

When the boss and his men arrived in camp that night, hungry and

tired, they found the place deserted. On the chuck wagon hung a long black mother-hubbard, to which was pinned a note addressed to the boss. He read it aloud to the others:

"That was a dog-gone mean trick that you fellows played on me. If Sadie hadn't happened along and showed you up for what you are I might have been a ghost forever and never knowed the difference, you blame old coyotes, you. Me and Sadie have gone to Abilene to get married, and I'll thank you to send me my back pay care the Last Chance Hotel. I won't work no more for no such dog-gone pie-biters as you are.

Yours truly,
Thomas Jones.

P. S. We ain't figured out how you done it, but Sadie thinks that show troop what was stuck in Abilene had something to do with it. When I find Plug Miller I'm going to pound the facts out of him, and then I'm coming back here and settle with you fellows for what you said about me while I was dead. T. J."

The Man on Blondin's Back*

BY EDWARD ACKER

"WANTED—for a very dangerous undertaking, a young man of courage and iron nerves. Must not weigh more than 120 lbs. Good pay. Apply all day. C. B., Brevoort House."

Desperation, as an impelling force, has an efficacy that is all its cruel own. And gaunt Hunger, as a wild means to wine-press a famished being to limits styled "desperate," has a sinister potency known only too well to him who feels its bony grip upon his weakened throat This baleful grip was now pinning me to the wall. I was fighting it—fighting hard as a five days' fast would allow me. My condition could be summed up in three words—out-of-work, homeless, friendless. Somewhere far out on the Great Lakes sped the tramp steamer which had unloaded me here in the town of Niagara Falls, with a cargo of used lumber. Stranded I was—badly, too—with the slimmest prospect for employment; no one had use for a common seaman, who told a harrowing tale of stark destitution. Although it was but September, charity seemed to be frozen up everywhere.

I dried the tears of self-pity welling up in my eyes, in order that I might more easily read the striking notice in the store window, which has attracted my bewildered attention. "A young man wanted for a very dangerous undertaking." I was young, and truly, I hit off the other essential qualification—"must not weigh more than 120 pounds." The reflection of myself imaged in the plate-glass window showed a woe-begone individual, hollow-cheeked, drawn, and shank-shrunk like a spectre. My clothes (literally rags), hung upon my attenuated frame like garments on the wooden uprights of a scarecrow. Surely, I weighed considerably less than the poundage required by the advertiser.

This inner assurance clinched my determination to apply for the "undertaking" howsoever dangerous it might prove to be; for I recked not consequences in the wretched state I was in. I wanted food so still the maddening calls of my gnawing stomach: food to

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bolster up my shaking knees—blessed food to let me live this glorious life so pregnant with hopeful possibilities, so full of sunshine as the cloudless blue vault above my unfortunate head. Completely overcome by the hopelessness of my unenviable position, I leaned my head against the brick wall of the building before me, and wept like a little child. "O mother, mother," I moaned, sobbing the while fit to wreck my wasted body. "O mother, why am I not sleeping at your side in the holy quietude of the green New Hampshire churchyard! Dear Lord, end this suffering, and lay my poor forsaken self far beyond the need of aid from men with hearts as hard as the pavement underneath my torn shoes!"

At this moment a loud blare of bugles caused me to raise my bowed head with a start. Looking about me, I beheld a swarm of excited people rushing to the edge of the curb, where, with much neck craning, they stood gazing intently down the street. I heard the clatter of galloping horses; almost immediately afterward there came in view a gaily caparisoned escort of soldiers. Flashing sword sheaths clanged janglingly against polished saddle and spur. Rousing cheers rent the air; while ladies waved their handkerchiefs madly, and added shrill cries to the welcoming clamor.

Now there was passing a capacious barouche in which were seated several distinguished-looking men in military attire. Among these sat one who wore civilian clothes. He was a young man of about my own age, and ever and anon he raised a high silk hat in token of salute to the volleying plaudits and huzzas. A happy boyish smile played upon the open countenance of the recipient of this unusual homage, who, withal, bore himself with a nameless dignity that stamped him a "somebody" quite out of the common run of everyday mortals.

My curiosity being aroused, I shook off my torpor, and ventured to inquire of a bystander, "Who is the young man in the carriage, and why all this excitement?"

For answer I received a dumfounded stare, while a most surprised voice cried out, "You're not joking, are you? Why, everybody knows that's the Prince of Wales—the next ruler of Great Britain. Just now he's going to the Falls, where he is to witness an exhibition this afternoon to be given in his honor."

At this juncture, a large crowd, surging after the prince's equipage, swept by. I found myself caught in the press, jostled from side to side, and flung at last against the side of the building behind me. When I was free to turn about, the first thing to strike my blurred gaze, was the shop window, and its dare-devil advertisement,

which had fascinated me before the cortége of the youthful prince had turned the current of my doleful thoughts. Now the sight of the strange notice brought me up with a shock—all the sad knowledge of my privation returned to me with tenfold force. Also, there flashed through my mind the determination I had formed just before the advent of the sparkling pageant.

The more I considered the matter, the greater grew my desire to see the danger-monger who sought for one in age and weight, the apparent counterpart of myself. "The die is cast," I muttered fiercely. Without further ado I turned on my heel, and grimly bent my shuffling steps toward the goal which might mean life, or perhaps death, to me. After diligent inquiry I came upon the address given by "C. B." in his advertisement.

Brevoort House was luckily not an imposing hotel, as I had feared. It proved to be nothing more nor less than a boarding house of the second class tucked away in a secluded section of the town. Having given sundry knocks upon a lion-faced knocker which adorned the center panel of the door, I had the satisfaction of seeing a one-inch opening appear at the edge, while a sharp female voice shrilled, "We've got nothing for beggars here. Go away!"

"I'm no beggar, madam," I responded with hot resentment. "I want to see Mr. C. B."

"What! another one?" sighed the door-lady, as she gingerly allowed me to pass inside.

"Another one!" I echoed, in stupefaction.

"Yes, one more," rejoined the other snappishly. "This makes about the twenty-fifth time that I've been called away from peeling potatoes to run down them steps to open this blessed door for young fellers on the same errand as you. They're filling every bit of spare room upstairs. Well, come up," she added ungraciously.

Up I toiled, but as you may well imagine, sickened at heart, and with hopelessness searing the innermost recesses of my soul. And truly had the lady spoken! I stumbled into a wide low-ceilinged room crowded with a round score of men; they were disposed over the apartment in all sorts of attitudes. Some stood idly about, while others spread themselves over the worn, heavy-tufted furniture with which the room was supplied.

A few curious glances were shot at me. Here and there I thought I marked a sneering smile at the idea, no doubt, that I cut a mighty poor figure among this mixed band of hardy, resolute-appearing spirits. But blame the sneerers I could not; for how

dared this wreck of me hope to compete in aught with these sturdy sailors, drivers and longshoremen, who formed the assemblage. In truth, I marvelled at the crass idiocy which kept me rooted here. Not many minutes had passed, when, all at once, the nervous laughter and mumbling conversation of the men in the room ceased. Looking up quickly, I perceived that another had entered upon the scene.

In the doorway stood a dapper little man, daintily pulling off a pair of white kid gloves. His curly blond hair and moustache matched the color of the trim suit he wore; on his face was a most quizzical look of amazement, as he examined the various types assembled before him. One glance at the newcomer was enough. Here stood "C. B." Instantly expectancy mounted to the highest pitch. Every one in the room arose to his feet, and waited eagerly for the wished-for explanation of the strange advertisement. Presently it came.

"Gentle*men*, I bid you all good day!" began the gaily attired entrant in a sharp, highly-pitched voice of a decided French accent. "You have all come in answer to my announcement. Yes? Very good! Therefore, for your early information I will explain for what I require the services of a young man, light in weight, but oh, so cool in the head. Who am I? I will tell you. I am Charles Blondin, acrobat and tight-rope walker." He gazed around to see, no doubt, if his hearers were fittingly impressed; then, striking a light for his cigarette, he went on. "This afternoon, before His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, and many other thousands of people, I am called upon to give an exhibition of my art at the Falls. I intend to walk across the rope stretched over the mighty cataract of Niagara, gentle*men*, but, my dear sirs! I—listen closely now—I do not intend to walk over the boiling rapids alone. Oh, no! For the express benefit of the young prince I shall dash over the rope with a man on my back. Understand? Never has this been accomplished before—never in the history of the world! Is there a possibility of death in the act? Of course! But a plucky young man will not fear to undertake the task. If I succeed—he gets one hundred dollars. Now, which one of you shall it be? That question I have just now to decide. Who speaks first?" He held up his diamond-bedecked forefinger, and scrutinized the faces of his audience. There was dead silence for a full minute. Then amid a shuffling of feet, three voices were raised in willingness to do or die. One of these was mine.

From the rest of the men came laughs, snorts, comic groans,

combined with a general cry in chorus of a decided negative to take the unheard-of risk. Shouts of "Excuse me!" "Good-bye!" "Here's luck to the foolish man on your back!" "The water's cold in the Falls!" resounded derisively above the tramping noise of many thronging out hastily through the narrow doorway. In less than thirty seconds the room had been completely emptied of all save the flashily attired rope-walker and the three of us who were prepared to accept the hazardous undertaking outlined by our prospective employer.

When the descending thumps upon the stairs had ceased, and the banging of the hall door below was followed by a silence which proclaimed that all the retreaters had left, Blondin turned to his remaining applicants.

A ray of hope shot through my heart. Now, at least, there appeared to be some hope that I might be chosen; surely a third chance was ever so much better than a twentieth. Again, as I considered my competitors for the coveted position, it struck me that my chances were brighter even than I had at first supposed. One of the men, a lank individual, carried his right arm in a sling. The other man was portly and moon-faced. That these were quite out of the pale of requirement was evinced as Blondin, after a cursory glance at the two, shook his head, puckered up his lips, and said decisively:

"Both of you won't do, my friends. I want a man with two good arms, and who is not too fat." He addressed himself to the stout chap. "You weigh more than one hundred and twenty, no?"

"I do," admitted the man; "but not much more—"

"Sorry, gentle*men*, ver—y;" and so saying the rope-walker politely bowed out two greatly disgusted adventurers.

"Now, monsieur—your turn!" Blondin grasped me by the arm with a grip that made me wince. Looking me straight in the eyes he addressed me point-blank. "Tell me; why are you willing to do this which may cost you your valuable life?"

"Why?" I repeated, making a valiant effort to steady my voice which trembled in spite of myself. "I'll tell you why! It's because I'm nearly dead for the want of something to eat. Starvation is a harder death than drowning, I guess. Therefore, I'm ready to go anywhere, or do anything that promises relief, one way or the other!" And herewith I blurted out the predicament I was in. My auditor listened with the closest attention. When I had finished my halting recital, he laid an impressive hand upon my shoulder.

"You shall have all the food you want to eat," Blondin asserted.

"But not before we have walked over the Falls. Suppose I get you things to eat now—what happens? Why, once your hunger is satisfied, you no longer will care to undertake the trip you have promised." As I tried to assure him to the contrary—"Oh, I know! Better wait until we have been filled with the applause of the thousands of onlookers, before we dine; you'll find you have gained an additional appetite with which to break your long fast."

Finding this argument unanswerable, I made a virtue of necessity, and resigned myself, with a good grace, to the inevitable. Thereupon, following instructions from my novel employer, I divested myself of the seedy apparel which I wore. Then, being furnished by Blondin, with a well-cut outfit, consisting of a blue coat and trousers, a grey hat and a pair of light duck shoes, I soon cut a figure quite at variance with the dilapidated object I had represented a few moments before. Everything fitted me well, as the Frenchman and I were about the same height and build.

"Good!" Blondin examined me with a critical eye, and rendered the verdict, which assured me that I was filling expectations. "Now to show you how you must rest on my back, and hold yourself correctly while I am proceeding over the dangerous Niagara."

He suited action to word. With ridiculous ease he lifted me up and swung me behind him. Soon I was competently instructed how to perch upon the muscled torso of the athlete in a way which served to throw my weight upon the upper part of Blondin's back. Thus placed, with arms grasping the shoulders of my man, and with legs entwined around his body, I was given sundry swift "rides" across the room upon a "horse" which toyed with a balancing stick, and walked in a line as straight as a die. To me it seemed almost like sunny childhood days when my lamented father used to frolic with his now unfortunate boy. His "rides" were like a comedy to me; these which I was now receiving smacked strongly of sombre tragedy.

"What is your name?" asked Blondin, when he had ended his practice by depositing me again on my feet.

"Dave Brahim," I replied.

My employer fetched a deep breath.

"Listen here, Davebrame," said he, fixing me with a weighty stare; "I have found you very satisfactory in the trials I have just given you; but, when we are up in the air, hundreds of feet, with death below, it will be another matter entirely. We may both be killed. For my part, I don't care. As for you—"

"I don't care, either!" I interposed.

"Very well. As I said, we may meet death. But, Davebrame, if we succeed—do you hear!—if we succeed!—glory will be ours forever! Our names will ring on and on! So long as any language exists, books in all tongues will relate the stirring story, how Blondin crossed the tight-rope across Niagara Falls carrying the plucky Davebrame upon his back! Ah, *mon garcon,* is it not worth while? It is! Not only will what I have said be the case, but for many, many years we shall surely be a grand theatrical attraction wherever men are who wish to admire two of the most daring men on earth!—you and I!"

Carried away by the dazzling picture he had conjured up in his mind's eye, Blondin hopped wildly up and down. His spirits were infectious. Almost before I knew it, I, too, was gleefully doing a dance of jollification. Certainly, the future did appear rosy; if we did but succeed! If we didn't—well, one never knows what comes after this life. I continued to cavort about the room until, at length, greatly exhausted by my undue exercise and exhilaration, I leaned against the wall for support.

In a twinkling Blondin was at my side, and led me to a seat.

"This will not do," he remonstrated. "Rest here a moment; then off we go to finish our glorious work as quick as possible, so that you may have your long-delayed dinner." Ten minutes later found us on our journey.

We were nearing the Falls; no need to tell me,—that sullen roar, quite unlike what one might expect to hear from the sound of falling waters. As we drew nearer and nearer to our destination, the rumble increased in volume with a thunderous portent that sent a thrill of wild terror through my soul.

Crowds were thronging in our direction. Someone noticed us, and shouted: "Hurrah, here comes Blondin!" The cry spread all along our route. Hundreds ran after the chaise in which we were seated; they surrounded the conveyance consumed with an eager curiosity. Men and boys climbed up at the sides with wild-eyed stares at the smiling individual at my side, who indulgently shook any out-stretched hand whenever it came within reaching distance. This adulation becoming tiresome at last, Blondin gave orders to the driver to whip up his horse; which was done, to the mortification of the disappointed straggling, out-distanced ones behind us.

We came to a stop on the outskirts of the greatest congregation of human beings I had ever seen. Thousands upon thousands of men, women and children formed a solid, gaily-colored mass as far

as the eye could reach. It needed not Blondin's averting call of, "Davebrame, we have arrived!" to inform me that we had reached the site of our triumph or extinction. No sooner had the words left the mouth of my companion, who was rising in the carriage, than a deafening roar from the crowd, drowning the tremendous noise of the Falls, told us that the entertainer of the day had been sighted.

Blondin seemed not at all pleased at the fact. His face wore an anxious, half-agonized expression, as he hurriedly grasped his handbag, and shouted in my ear, "Quick, *mon ami*—jump out! Give me an end of the balancing pole you are holding; we will dash straight to the small red house on your left. See, the people are coming toward us!" With a mad dash we barely avoided those in the van of the onrushing flood of admirers.

Soon we were safely ensconced in a room where Blondin doffed his street attire, and garbed himself in a gay, bespangled acrobat's costume of light blue. On his feet he clapped a pair of leather slippers. Thus accoutered, he glanced in a looking-glass, carefully brushed his curly, blond locks, twisted his small moustache to a fine point, and, throwing his coat over his shoulders, announced that we were ready. As he made for the door, a thought struck him.

Extending his hand, he took mine and silently held it for a full minute in a tight clasp. Then, with a sad light in his blue eyes, and with a suspicious quaver in his voice, he said:

"Good-bye, brave man Davebrame; good-bye—that is, if we fail in our attempt."

In reply I shook my head doubtfully, and forced a laugh which I was far from feeling; for I hated to think that harm should come to this trim, well-turned athlete, now so strong, so supple, and so aglow with the flush of blooming health.

Outside of the house we found the expected throng awaiting us. However, the police broke a narrow, serried passageway through the spectators, thus enabling us to proceed slowly, but surely. By holding the balancing pole high above my head, I discovered that I could better manage that awkward article, and with much less danger of irreparable breakage, than by trying to steer it clear of the fluctuating, shifting mass of curious sightseers.

We halted at a tall, gaily decorated pole imbedded in the ground. At the top of the pole swung two large flags; one, the stars and stripes; the other flaunted the bold, broad red, white and blue of *La Belle France*.

"There is the rope!" Blondin pointed excitedly to a thin dark line

drawn taut from the flag-pole, and losing itself in a gigantic volume of what seemed to be dense smoke or vapor. It needed not the terrible roar now filling my ears to tell me that I stood at the brink of Niagara. My heart sank, my teeth chattered like castanets, and I trembled in every fibre of my being. A stupor of fear possesssed me; I scarcely felt aware that Blondin had thrust his coat into my arms, and wrenched the balancing stick from my nerveless grasp.

Kicking off the leathern slippers, the athlete, smilingly bowing to right and left, tripped easily to the very verge of the dizzy chasm. Then, to my extreme horror, Blondin stepped boldly out into nothingness, over the gaping mouth of the frothing, thundering, crater-like inferno!

The little Frenchman was surely a doomed man. I tried to cry out; a mad shriek rose in my throat, but stuck there, and well-nigh choked me. From the people surrounding me broke cheer upon cheer—and not without cause. For, most marvelous to relate, the lithe form of the fearless Frenchman was seen to run nimbly along the dark line extending into the mist. Here he disappeared from my wild-eyed view—but not for long. In a trice he was back again as from nowhere, standing at my side, gaily kissing his finger-ends to the multitude applauding his neck-risking act.

Suddenly, Blondin turned to me. "Come, Davebrame!" His tones were eager; his eyes sparkled with an ineffable lustre; his bosom heaved as though the whole man were reining himself under the tremors of a violent excitement. "Come, come,—let us be going!" I understood. Only for a moment did I waver. Then, boldly casting to the ground the coat I held, I leaped lightly upon Blondin's back.

The acrobat poised himself on the brink of the precipice. A deep silence fell upon the watching thousands. Somewhere a deep, megaphonic voice broke the strained quiet: "Your Roy—al High—ness, La—dies, a—and gen—tle—men! You are about to witness the most wonderful and most dangerous feat ever attempted by a rope-walker since the world began! It has never been done before, and never will be again! Charles Blondin, of France, will now perform the hazardous and unparalleled feat of carrying a living man across Niagara Falls on a tight-rope!"

"Ready, Davebrame?"

"Yes, sir."

"Look up into the sky!"

I looked: the azure glory of the sun-lit heavens met my gaze. Far, far off, floated a small white cloud shaped amazingly like the

banked mound of a grave, with a high headstone at one end. Even as a conscious thrill shot through me, I became aware that I was swaying gently from side to side. Now, a fresh breeze visited my cheek—also, a few drops of wet. Instinctively, I dropped my eyes.

Way below I caught a flitting glimpse of green tree and gray rock; then my startled gaze was pinned by a moving surface which sped onward beneath me in a swirling, tempestuous sweep. It seemed as though I were flying sideways through the air! Distance was being covered with rapidity; onward I appeared to dash above the receding green-and-blue ground. So buoyant and exhilarated did I feel, that it was without the slightest sense of fear that I heard Blondin's voice speaking as though in a happy dream:

"Keep perfectly still, *mon garcon*. We are now standing over the rushing waters of the grand American Falls!" He glanced about him with all the ease of a man standing at his own safe fireside. "Keep quiet, now. See, to your left. There, near the bank of the river, is situated a rustic lodge, which is covered by a large French flag. Do you see it?"

"I certainly do," I answered calmly. "I also notice a young man seated within the place, waving a handkerchief toward us."

"Davebrame, do you know who that is? No? Well, it is the Prince of Wales, himself! After you have earned your dinner, we will have a nice chat with him."

"My hunger's gone," I announced cheerily. "Really, I feel first-rate now. Just see the people crowded together on that suspension bridge. Must be thousands there!"

Blondin steadied himself and looked up. "Most of them are ladies, too," said he, chuckling with a Frenchman's pride. "How they are cheering and waving their pretty parasols. Listen!"

Indeed, shrill cries could be heard intermingling in the terrible crash of the tumbling flood. High above me—here and there—a sunshade glinted red or blue in the rays of the golden light, as the fair owner of the gay parasol waved an enthusiastic token of her admiration.

Slowly, carefully, Blondin wended his hazardous way onward. I laughed gaily, for all sense of fear seemed to have deserted me; I was possessed by a delightful idea of the vastness of the surrounding empyrean; and the dreadful majesty displayed here by nature's forces awed me no more than as though I were a bird breasting the smiling heavens. Peering over the shoulders of the rope-walker, I saw, almost with a pang of disappointment, that we were reaching the opposite shore.

In a few moments Blondin had bounded upon the solid green turf. Here we were again hedged in by a yelling mob of hero worshippers, who cheered us to the echo, wrung our hands, slapped us on the back, and in other ways lionized us to our distraction—I should correct—to mine. For Blondin, resplendent in his sparkling raiment of blue fringed with gold, bore himself as the recipient of honors should. His graceful Gallic ways went well with his slender, finely-formed figure; he was the joy, not only of the surrounding ladies, but of all the men as well. He chatted furiously with everybody, bowing and scraping as though on springs.

I stood helplessly by, altogether lost in the shuffle, and vaguely wondering, why, in the midst of the congratulation, I did not feel one jot moved up to the quickening measure of the happy occasion.

A strange numbness was stealing over all the members of my body. I had felt it creeping on me the moment my feet had touched solid ground, but I had fought it then as I was fighting it now—with all my might! Again, everything in my line of vision was behaving in a most unaccountable way;—Blondin, his admirers, the earth, and even the deep blue sky danced before my eyes, like far-off objects seen on shipboard while the vessel is laboring in the trough of a turbulent sea.

"*Au revoir,* ladies and all!" Blondin had broken away. I was dimly conscious that he was coming toward me; my knees were trembling as with palsy, and I struggled mightily to straighten them, in which attempt I half succeeded. "*Eh bien,* Davebrame, back we go once more—the last time. We must hurry, for the dinner will be waiting!" cried the Frenchman gaily.

As he spoke the words, he picked me up and slung me on his back as though I were a babe. The hold I placed about the rope-walker's neck was of the weakest. I tried to tell him that I felt ill; but Blondin, still under the enchantment of his beguiling reception, evidently noticed nothing but the cheering crowd, and heard nothing but its applause. He gripped his balancing pole, and, with a final bow, stepped once more upon his precarious pathway over the boiling cataract of Niagara.

Then the inevitable happened! Blondin, carefully picking his way, with death below, may or may not have reached the centre of the rope, when, suddenly, I felt a dart of pain shoot through my heart,—my fingers loosened their insecure grasp;—in my ears thundered an unearthly clamor that came not from the Falls. Like a thunderclap, the horrible truth flashed over me! I was fainting!—fainting here on this narrow tight-rope over these deadly waters!

I could feel myself slipping—slipping—slipping heavily to one side, causing Blondin to stagger and lurch from right to left in an alarming manner. From the lips of the endangered acrobat burst a shrill shriek of acute terror. So thrilling was the cry that its intensity penetrated even my fast-benumbing senses, and, for a fleeting moment, awoke me to a full realization of my awful peril. A grim determination swept over me. With the last ounce of my strength I clawed desperately at Blondin's shoulders, dug my nails into something soft, gritted my teeth;—then all became dark, and I knew no more.

"Who are those men? Where am I?" These were my first words when I returned to light and consciousness.

Blondin was bending over me; when he saw my eyes had opened he gave a joyous cry, seized me in his arms, and lifted me from the bench upon which I lay to a chair at a table in the center of this flower-garlanded lodge embowered with foliage.

I gazed vacantly at the surrounding group of distinguished-looking ladies and gentlemen, who were regarding me with anxious looks. As I tried to still the bobbing of my aching head, I dreamily wondered why they were here, and why I.

Blondin's voice broke in on my wool-gathering thoughts. "Hurrah, Davebrame!" he shouted. "Thanks to *le bon Dieu,* you are yourself again!" He turned and called to someone: "Waiter!"

Soon I was eating the first meal that had crossed my lips in five days—and what a meal it was! and with what relish did I do ample justice to its adequate proportion, its tempting variety! Dishes were cleared as if by magic—the clean-picked bones of a good-sized fowl alone remained to attest the voracity of an appetite whetted by stress of prolonged famine.

When I had finished my "breakfast" I suddenly became aware of two things, which the welcome sight of food had driven out of my head. One:—that I was the observed of most wondering observers; the other,—most important of all:—*why were not Blondin and I now lying at the bottom of Niagara Falls?* By what miracle had we escaped the awful fate confronting us when I felt myself dropping into the abyss?

"Certainly, Your Royal Highness; it would give him, no doubt, great pleasure." These words spoken by the rope-walker now struck on my hearing, and caused me to turn about with a start.

Before me stood a pleasant-faced, fair-haired young man, who was regarding me with a kindly smile. Something in the face and smile seemed strangely familiar to me, but, at the moment, I was so

confused that I could not imagine where I had seen both before.

Blondin placed his arm around me and helped me to a standing position. Then, clearing his throat, he said impressively:

"Mister Davebrame, His Majesty, the Prince of Wales, has expressed a wish that you be presented to him. He desires to speak with you."

To speak with me!—the heir apparent to the throne of England! I felt myself glowing like a furnace; I tried to make a bow; but what an awkward move I must have made, and what a glaring picture of "confusion worse confounded"! However, I pulled myself together enough to take the soft, white hand held out by the prince, who gave my fingers a tight pressure.

I will refrain from quoting what the prince said to me, as I am not given to vain glory, nor do I care to here recite my praises. But I will state that his kind words acted like a charm upon my overwrought feelings;—the flood-gates of my heart were opened. Almost before I knew it, I was brokenly stammering out into the sympathetic ears of the Prince of Wales and his circle, the tale of my misadventures; I was careful to explain the woful lack of brave intention on my part in crossing Niagara.

When I had concluded, a murmur ran through my listeners. With one accord they arose and consulted earnestly together, the prince appearing to be the most earnest of all. Imagine my intense surprise and amazement, when, directly afterward, he came to my side, and, with the most importunate entreaties, pressed me to accept a handsome purse collected from among his retinue. Need I say, this stroke of kindness overwhelmed me quite?

That same evening Blondin and I, seated in his quaint old-fashioned room in the Hotel Brevoort, discussed roseate plans for the future, which, unlike the usual run of day-dreams, were happily destined to come true.

In the midst of our fraternal converse, the thought, strangely forgotten in the exciting round of the day's happenings, crossed my mind. "Tell me," I enquired anxiously, "how happened it that you and I were not dashed to death when"—here I shuddered.

Blondin's cheery laugh rang out with a hearty resonance.

"Do you know, *mon cher* Davebrame," answered the debonair little Frenchman, nonchalantly puffing rings of cigarette smoke towards the ceiling, "do you know that when everything seemed—what do you Americans call it?—ah, 'up' with us both, you suddenly dropped your idea of visiting the breakers below? Instead, you dug your fingers deep into my neck, and hung on, like you never

would let go. This made it possible for me to right my balance, and finish the rest of our pleasant little promenade. Only, of course,"—he stroked his neck gingerly, wincing as he did so—"they had to pry your fingers loose with an iron ferule when we returned to our starting place."

"A thousand pardons!" I began.

"Not another word, *mon bon!*" cried Blondin. "What are a few paltry scratches compared to the saving of our precious lives, the winning of our undying fame, and the eclat of our recognition by a kingly prince of the blood!"

The Madonna of St. Ignace*

BY EDWIN CARLILE LITSEY

"I WANT to tell you a story, Lamb," said Jade, very suddenly.

"All right, Buddy; but see that it's not a lie!" retorted Vane, doing a pirouette on the flat, gray sand, and giving a piston stroke at the air directly in front of him.

The South Beach at St. Augustine has few patrons in September. Lambert Vane, man of the world and pleasure lover, had been called down to central Florida on business by the manager of one of his orange groves. Returning, he had run across Budthorn Jade, artist, in a little café down on George Street—a café where one may sit and eat bearded shrimp and pink stone crabs, and sip his glass of near beer. Jade explained that he was in search of a model for a special piece of work.

Mid-afternoon found them reveling in the sea. No one else was there. The keeper of the bath house, humped over a paper-back novel, had told them where to find suits and had gone on with his reading. Jade had grown tired after an hour in the water, and suggested a stroll along the beach. Vane consented. They walked a little way in silence before Jade spoke, and had his reply.

"I've a notion you won't feel like cavorting when I'm done," returned the artist, lifting a face peculiarly twisted by nature but which revealed nobility behind the cruel mask. "It's not an ordinary story."

"Oh! Your pardon zen for ze an-teek, m'sieu!" mimicked Vane, and laughed, glancing amused eyes at the low, slight form beside him.

"You're so full of life, Lamb, that I believe nothing short of death will sober you."

Jade's look swept the fine figure of his friend. His flesh showed white and firm and muscular, but his blue eyes bulged a little, and were puffy-lidded.

Vane waved his hand airily.

"Something I never will know anything about, *mon ami;* I, you,

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nor anybody. We know no more when we die than we know when we are born, and I call that a genuine blessing."

He drew the racy wind deep into his lungs till his chest stood out like a piece of quarried stone.

"Trot out your yarn, Buddy," he continued, gently pounding his ribs with his fists.

"I'm afraid it will be pearls before swine; a dweller in Philistia will hardly see it as it is."

"Is there a woman in it, sonny?"

"Yes."

Apparently the big man did not notice the altered tone in which the monosyllable was spoken.

"Trust *me*, then, to get the point. My weakness, you know; I can't help it."

Jade scarcely heard the operatic air which Vane immediately launched. He had tried his best to make his friend see the folly and wrong of his career, but with no success. Jade was serious, patient, hard-working, and idealistic in a way. Vane was loyalty's very self to men, and had a heart as big as the universe, but—he dandled the pleasures of life upon his knees like mimes in a show. Now the artist was thinking that the recital he had proposed would be indeed words wasted, whereas the memory of it had given him pain, and wonder, and unanswered questionings.

"We'd better pass this up, Lamb," he said, directly. "I'm sure it wouldn't interest you greatly."

"Pass it up, and I'll stand you on your nut in the first salt water pool," replied Vane. "Out with it, Buddy; don't tantalize a fellow!"

Jade shrugged his thin shoulders, over which his too big bathing suit hung grotesquely, and began in a determined, even voice.

"It was late last winter, when you were in southern France. I had been hunting for weeks for a suitable Magdalene—all the guild try that sooner or later—but had been unable to find one that would do. Upon a vile night in mid-February, I caught her; one of the lower order; not clad in rags exactly, but her finery was faded, and she wore a shawl around her head instead of a hat. I think the effect the shawl lent was what decided me. The contour of her face was severely unrelieved, and I saw it as it was. She had stopped near a lighted window, and her expression caused me to halt. Instantly she accosted me with some stock remark of her class. A mixture of snow and rain was driving down the street. She was unprotected from the weather, so I drew her under my umbrella, and as we moved on I told her my profession and what I wanted of her. She

thought at first that it was badinage, but I soon convinced her of my sincerity. She consented to sit for me, and we agreed upon terms quickly. I went to the door of her lodging with her, for the storm had grown worse; advanced her a little money on our contract, then gave her my address and left her, too amazed, I think, to thank me for my aid. But I had seen hunger in her eyes."

"And you really saw her again?"

"She appeared next morning near the hour named. By daylight I could see that my find was genuine. I can't exactly describe her to you, Lamb. She was young, had a good figure, brown hair and eyes— oh, well, she filled my idea of the character I wanted, and that's enough. It was the indescribable expression of her face in repose, which charmed me. I rigged her out in befitting costume, made her do her hair to my liking, and went to work."

He stopped talking, and for a few moments the musical wash and gurgle of the surf alone broke the silence.

Lambert Vane was guilty of no irrelevant outburst during the interlude, but strode on with composed face by his friend's side.

"We talked, of course," Jade resumed, presently. "On her own initiative, she told me about herself. Poorly born, poverty hunted, deserted by her father, her mother a sewing woman in some sweat-shop; the brief attentions of some moneyed lover, a short period of idleness and ease, a baby; then the old life.

"I had barely sketched the picture as I had originally planned it, when a new idea came to me. She would make a better mother than she would a Magdalene; so, unknown to her, I painted a baby at her breast. The result was satisfactory. When I showed her the finished picture she laughed, then sobbed, and ran from the studio.

"That night Jeevers, whose opinion all artists value, dropped in, and I took him to the canvas. What do you suppose he said?"

They stopped as by a common impulse, and turned toward the sea. The tide was going out, and the sand glistened to right and left.

"I suppose he complimented it," said Vane, slowly; "you do good work."

"Yes," assented Jade, as they started back to the distant bath house set among the dunes. "Jeevers seemed actually moved. He studied the painting a long time, then turned to me with this remark: 'Jade, you have here the finest Madonna the moderns have produced.'"

"My! Buddy, how did you stand it?"

There was an evident return of Vane's habitual light-heartedness in the question.

"It kind o' staggered me, to tell you the truth. You see, such a thing had not been my intention, at all. I was simply working for a Mother and Child."

"Well?"

"Jeevers' remark wouldn't leave me. I thought about it for two days, then took my brush and painted a halo about her hair."

"The devil you did!"

"It was the one touch needed. That poor sinner from the streets had been a human mother; I painted her the Mother of God. Was it sacrilege, Lamb?"

"Don't ask me such a question Jade!" said Vane, almost testily. "You know I am not a religionist."

Silence again, as the two moved on over the desolate strand. The sun was low now, and their shadows stretched out to meet the restless waves, which seemed to hold a human moan.

"Go on," spoke Vane, presently, in a low voice.

Jade gave him a quick glance from his bright gray eyes. The tall man's head was bent, and he was frowning at the sand.

"There is more," agreed the artist, his sensitive mouth, which nature had pranked with and had twisted oddly, becoming set and stern.

"I heard that the trustees of St. Ignace wanted a Madonna, and I took mine to them, naming its price. There was not a dissenting vote."

"And now—?"

"She hangs on the wall in that holy place by the side of Christ."

Vane drew a deep breath, and Jade saw his hands clench and open.

They had reached a point opposite the bath house which, strangely enough, was set back nearly a half mile from the beach. Now they started toward the dunes, avoiding the thorny creepers which throve, somehow, in that soilless waste.

"And the end is not yet," said Jade.

Vane did not reply.

"I went to the church late one afternoon to see how my picture looked. There were only a few worshippers. They had placed a shaded electric bulb over my canvas, giving just enough light to enhance its beauty. A woman was kneeling before the picture. I almost brushed against her before I saw her. She was praying. I went away."

They were nearing the bath house steps when Jade resumed.

"I went again and again. She was always there, the same woman. She must have spent most of her time there. I could tell by her

clothes that she belonged to the very poor. At last, one day, I waited for her in the vestibule."

"'Madam,' I said, 'pardon me, but will you tell me why you always pray before the same picture? I painted it; that is why I ask.'

"I shall never forget the anguish in her face when she lifted it to me.

"'Sir,' she replied, 'it's the likeness o' my daughter, my Rosie, who I haven't seen for two years. I pray the Holy Mother to send her back to me—'"

"My God!" muttered Vane, as he turned away, trembling.

In the Name of the Lion*

BY EFFIE RAVENSCROFT

THE Lion of the Day gazed without interest at the pile of envelopes awaiting his attention. The Lion painted wonderful pictures and the pictures brought even more wonderful prices. These facts, combined with the additional one that he was heir to a title and with the prevalent idea that he was a woman-hater, explained, to society at large, his popularity and influence. To The Lion himself, they were inexplicable, he being an humble-minded man.

He could almost have told, without breaking the seals, the contents of the envelopes before him. There were one or two checks, (even checks had ceased to cause excitement in the breast of The Lion), the usual number of invitations, a few documents not to be classified, and—his wandering and indifferent gaze was caught by two epistles which had somehow separated themselves from the others and were lying side by side. He fished out one and glanced hastily down the first page.

A flush, dark and crimson, made its appearance beneath his tan and slowly worked its way outward.

"That," he said aloud but quite placidly, "comes dangerously near to being an insult. In fact it is an insult. He says, too"—referring again to the offending missive—"that he will call in person. The honor is, apparently, all mine."

With a short laugh of disgust, he threw the missive as far from him as the dimensions of the room would permit. When it fell into one corner, he gazed wrathfully in that direction for a moment; then, seizing the other letter, he proceeded to read:

> "My dear Fellow:
> There is a legend afloat to the effect that at some time, perhaps in another incarnation, you really loved a woman. I entreat you by that sacred memory to give me some help, if it be only advice. You will, of course, assume that I am joking, but I assure you that this time I am far from being in a joking mood. To explain as briefly as possible: I'm sincerely in love; I'm miserably poor; and the difficulties in the way of my attainment of perfect happi-

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ness are my two wealthy but bigoted aunts. *She* is their bond-slave—that is, their companion. I am the heir of the aforesaid aunts; but they have 'higher matrimonial aspirations for their brother's son than union with a penniless and socially obscure woman'! That *She* is as beautiful as an angel besides being an angel, affects the case not at all. To marry in that direction means disinheritance for me. Marriage on my present income is a financial impossibility. I have no profession and am as capable of making a living as is a new-born babe, for which humiliating condition my aforesaid relatives are entirely responsible—their 'aspirations' again, you understand. Because of the situation, *She* is threatened with discharge; think of it, with *discharge!* You met *Her* at my aunts' home last winter and, having seen her, will understand that I will never give her up. What is a poor devil to do?

Yours in despair,
Tom."

The Lion wore a very grave expression as he laid down his friend's communication.

"Poor fellow!" he mused. "His seems to be a hopeless case. Don't see what I can do to help him. Strange to say, I do remember that evening at 'The Briers'; and stranger still, I remember the winsomest face I've seen on this side of the water, though it belonged to one supposed to be merely useful and not in the least ornamental. But strangest of all, is how this world's goods became mixed in the distribution! Now there's the subject of that interesting document!" Here he directed a scornful glance at the epistle in the corner. At sight of it, however, he suddenly sat bolt upright. The perplexed frown disappeared from his countenance and was succeeded by a grin of exultation.

"I have an idea!" he exclaimed. "Actually, an idea!"

For the next few moments his attitude was one of profound meditation. Finally he stirred.

"Well," he remarked to the empty room, "it may be mean but it's for Tom's sake. Besides, the heiress and her parent need a lesson, and I'm going to give it to them."

The same day, Tom Carew received a note, which read:

"Tom, my son, I'm about to prove to your satisfaction and my own, just how much is in a name. Be at my bungalow tomorrow at 10 a.m., and bring with you your friend from *The Enquirer*. Assure him that he will obtain a scoop."

And the signature was that of The Lion.

* * * * * * *

James Allison, society editor of *The Evening Enquirer*, was really an important member of the staff of that paper, though not for the world would the editor-in-chief have had him discover that fact. As

he could trace his ancestry in honored line even a little farther than many of the "four hundred," his entrée to that exclusive set was assured—wherein lay his peculiar value.

It cannot be truthfully stated that Allison was an altogether agreeable person to have around. He had an uncomfortable way of discovering important things that were not intended to be discovered, and of immediately converting them into "copy" of an entirely unassailable nature from the standpoint of the courts; at ignoring things that were intended to be discovered, he was a past master; and at writing "the faint praise that damns," he was an adept. It was upon an item of the last-mentioned nature that he was engaged when saluted by his friend of swaddling-clothes days, Tom Carew, in a tone that was a fitting accompaniment to that friend's expression,—one of profound mystery.

"Jim," said Tom, in what was intended for a whisper, "just come out with me and I'll put you on to the biggest scoop of the season!"

Jim Allison was not an impressionist; he was a cool-headed, cold-blooded, experienced newspaper man. Therefore, instead of leaping to his feet in wild excitement, as Carew half expected him to do, he looked doubtfully at his watch.

"I don't know about that, Tom," he said. "I'm right busy. We get out a noon edition, you know."

Tom looked at him in disgust.

"My son," he said, "you don't know what you're talking about. Let me tell you our destination;" and he whispered a name which caused the impassive Jim to whistle in astonishment.

"Why, that fellow's the lion of the day!" he exclaimed. "A kind of god to whom Apollo couldn't hold a candle! If there's anything to be had from that quarter, I'm with you!"

It was in vain that Jim probed Tom with questions, while they were on their way to the bungalow of The Lion. Tom preserved the utmost secrecy. No other course was possible for, like a good soldier, he was unquestioningly obeying orders and knew no more about the probable outcome of their mission than his companion.

Having reached their destination, The Lion's man imparted the information that his master was in the library; that he had just at that moment been joined by a caller; that he was therefore engaged; but that if it pleased them to wait, would they just follow him, the man, into the adjoining room?

That offer, Tom promptly accepted; for there was no other conclusion left open to him than that he was supposed to accept it. That he was correct in this surmise was proved by the note that the man,

unobserved by Jim, dexterously slipped into his hand. Tom, sedately treading the hall behind Allison, read:

> "Keep quiet, and be sure that your friend hears the entire conversation. I've heard of Allison and have concluded that the effect will be better if he thinks that you have put up a game on me and that I'm entirely innocent of his presence. Request him to make his article as discreet as possible, omitting the name of my companion but using all others. You will understand."

One small ray of light dawned upon Tom. The Lion was about to help his fiancée and him by means of the press; but how? Still mystified but still confidently obedient, he tapped Jim upon the shoulder.

"We must be quiet," he whispered. "No one must suspect that we are here."

The warning was just in time to prevent the society editor from exclaiming in astonishment at being ushered into a room which, despite the hour, was in almost midnight gloom. Moreover, The Lion's man, apparently negligent, made no attempt to lessen the darkness but silently withdrew.

The furniture was dimly discernible, and Jim was about to grope his way to a seat when his attention was arrested by voices proceeding from the adjoining apartment, which was separated from the other by portieres. The latter were slightly parted,—just enough so to make the occupants of the library distinctly visible to Tom and his companion, while the darkness of their apartment effectually shielded them from discovery.

Perhaps what followed was not, strictly speaking, an exactly honorable procedure; but all's fair in love and—journalism. Jim was there in his business capacity. His professional instinct was already on the *qui vive,* for he had caught from the library the words, "we don't want anybody to know about this, of course," and he scented a story of the nature that his soul dearly loved. Therefore when Tom, the master of ceremonies, motioned him to a position in close proximity to the portieres, he obeyed with alacrity.

Seated at the table and directly facing Allison, was a man whom he instantly recognized as the head of the fabulously wealthy but as yet socially obscure family of Gilbert. This gentleman was obviously somewhat excited, but it was impossible to determine whether his unusual state was produced by awe of the celebrity in whose presence he sat, or by the weight of his mission. Of one thing, however, there could be no doubt: his confidence in himself and in the success of his mission was tremendous, a fact indicated by the tone of voice in which he addressed The Lion.

"The case, sir," he said, pompously and yet nervously, "stands

thus: the Phoenician Massage Cream Company has offered you $50,000 to select for them the most beautiful young woman in America, you being the acknowledged connoisseur. You are then to paint her picture at your own price, and the company will use it on a calendar. If she objects, which may be the case if your choice falls upon one of your society beauties, she will be offered a blank check; whereupon," he chuckled, "she will withdraw her objections.

"It's an advertising scheme, of course. And it's a dead secret yet. Nobody knows about it except you and the company—and me. Never mind how I found it out—that's a dead secret, too. That's why I came in person. We all want this published in our own way and time." (Here Allison, in the adjoining room, hugged himself jubilantly, and only caution prevented his hugging Tom.)

"My point is this: You are dictator when it comes to female charms. The woman you pick out is going to be famous—famous for keeps—over night. She'll be *the* drawing-card when you label her the most beautiful woman. She'll be invited everywhere. She can marry anybody. Now, I want you to pick out my daughter and heiress, Miss Gilbert. You agree to do this and I'll duplicate the Phoenician Company's check. Talk about easy money!"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Gilbert," said The Lion in a tone which made the listening Tom start, so unfamiliar was it, "but I cannot oblige you."

Gilbert's near-sighted eyes looked as if they were about to leave his head. "You cannot mean," he gasped, "that—that—oh, how shall I say it?—that you *refuse?*"

"Yes," replied The Lion, "simply that and nothing more."

A long and awful pause followed. Finally The Lion spoke, and his well-modulated tones held the quietness that presages a storm.

"You see, Mr. Gilbert," he said, "the matter involves both my honor and my reputation. Consequently, I shall not be able to accept the company's generous offer, for the most beautiful woman in America is not Miss Gilbert, not Miss Gilbert by any manner of means. She is Miss Armyn Herbert of 'The Briers.'"

This so excited the enterprising journalist in the adjoining room that he almost betrayed his presence. The woman-hater, the man who had never been known to compliment a woman, the popular idol whose unconsidered words were weighed and treasured, had ignored the acknowledged beauties and set the priceless seal of his favor upon an unknown name! Jim hugged himself again as he mentally pictured the social upheaval that would follow the appearance of his article in *The Evening Enquirer.*

The Lion arose.

"I feel sure," he said softly, "that no amount of money on earth would induce Miss Herbert to permit her picture to be used for advertising purposes. We will consider our interview ended." And ringing for a servant, he strode from the room.

The library, having been vacated by its original occupants, was immediately taken possession of by Tom and his friend. It had occurred to the latter that a little light upon the subject was both desirable and necessary. But to Tom, deepest gloom and brilliant sunlight would at that moment have appeared as one and the same thing. For he understood the plan of The Lion and he knew it would succeed.

* * * * * * *

Two months had elapsed since the appearance in *The Evening Enquirer* of an article which, upon unquestionable authority, pronounced Miss Armyn Herbert of "The Briers" the most beautiful woman in the country. Guarded mention had been made of an heiress' attempt and ignominious failure to bribe the distinguished author of the statement and win this glory for herself.

The Lion of the Day was in his studio. He was not, however, at work. On the contrary, both hands were buried in the depths of his trousers' pockets, while upon his face was an expression which was a ludicrous combination of astonishment and satisfaction.

"Well," he said, "that's the best news I've had for many a day. Who would have thought it? Think I'll read it again."

Without removing his hands from his pockets, he leaned over the table and proceeded to peruse for the second, but not the last, time the epistle that had given him so much pleasure:

> "I write to ask, with humility and the utmost deference, (the result of your exalted position in the public esteem), if you will so far honor me as to act as best man at my wedding.
>
> Yes, old fellow, it is actually true! I tell you, marrying Miss Herbert the companion, and Miss Herbert the famous beauty, are propositions of entirely different natures in the judgment of my aunts. Why, they didn't even deny the 'adopted daughter' story, which Jim put in on my authority! On the contrary, they tried to induce everybody to believe it, and I must say that they have since lived nobly up to their part.
>
> Now do make up your mind to grant me this last favor, and thereby add one more item to the account of
>
> Your eternal debtor,
> Tom Carew."

The Lion went to the window and gazed thoughtfully out.

"Verily," he said, "there is much in a name."

Playing the Nations*

FREDERICK HAROLD BEACH

AHLBUD the proprietor, the Englishman, and the American, appeared almost simultaneously on the veranda of the Grand Hotel at Tutecorin, and squinted in the glare which was already beginning to quiver with heat.

"Good morning," was the proprietor's greeting. "Did the sahibs sleep well?"

"I slept a bit," assented the Englishman, "though it was bally hot."

"I had a pretty good night," replied the American,—a younger man. "You gave me a pretty good fan-boy; who was he?"

"Yes, young Shumari is very faithful. He served as *punkah walla* for both the sahibs, whose rooms adjoin."

"The lad was wide awake," agreed the Englishman, seating himself heavily at a little table and removing his helmet. "Send him around and I'll give him something."

"Shumari, you said?" asked the American.

"Son of Benassad the Blind,—once Benassad the Splendid. A good boy with a hard lot, a heavy *karma*. He fishes all day and pulls the *punkah* ropes many a time all the night to feed his brothers and and widowed mother."

"Widowed?" repeated Burroughs, the American. He liked the Hindu's voice, its cool, soothing quality, and knew that a mere questioning intonation would keep it going for hours.

"Benassad the Blind is now dead, Sahib,—dead of English generosity."

"Huh? How's that?" Winwood, the Englishman, asked sharply, suddenly taking interest in the slowly dragging talk. Burroughs lit a cigarette and seated himself on the veranda railing. The dark-skinned Dahlbud looked off into the past and summoned words wherewith to frame his tale.

"Benassad was in his younger days a jungle guide, leading parties of the foreign born into the heart of the hunting grounds. He was,—how do you say it?—intrepid, fearless, sure, never failing to

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secure for his party fine sport and fine skins. It was he who saved Sir Graymoor from the man-eating tiger of Rangal, carrying him sixteen miles through the night jungle to the house of the surgeon. Sir Graymoor called him brother,—and Benassad loved him.

"It was the year before the famine that he made his last trip. He took a party of tourists,—Americans,—to hunt big game,—big to them, at least; but to Benassad, small indeed. As were all the hunters that Benassad guided, so these were very successful. For his services one of the men gave him at parting a pistol, an American pistol, beautiful to look upon,—as are the pearl caskets of the jewellers in the bazaar."

"Yes, I've seen that kind of toy,—in Chicago," chuckled Winwood. "Typically American!" Burroughs' lips twitched in a smile; but he offered no comment.

"Ay, a beautiful toy! A tinselled machine of murder!" went on the narrator in disdain and indignation. "For one day as Benassad was prying out a shell, the trigger fell, the cylinder exploded, and Benassad was thereafter, the Blind."

"What rotten luck!" exclaimed the Englishman. "I'll give the boy a crown."

"Damn shame!" muttered Burroughs. "But what about his dying of English generosity?" He looked casually at Winwood as he put the emphasis on "English."

"I come to that. It was, as you say, a pity. From being king of hunters Benassad became a *punkah walla*,—a toiler at ropes to fan travellers as they slept! Ah, it was pitiful to see his great, beautiful body huddled under a window, to see the muscles of his strong, scarred arms pulling on the puny ropes, to see his sadly lowered head, to know that he was hiding from you his blind white eyes!

"A *punkah walla* does not get much. Benassad would not beg; and the knowledge that his wife and boy were suffering want made him the more unhappy. He served one night an Englishman who had heard the story of his blindness, and the Englishman in his pity gave him twenty rupees."

"That was bally decent of him," declared Winwood.

"Perhaps,—in intention; but he let too many know of it. Before noon all the loungers in the market place, all the idlers along the strand, all the beggars of the town, knew that Benassad had received gold from the Englishman. And as he walked at dusk through a narrow alley to his home, touching a familiar object here and there with his stick, he was set upon, slashed, robbed and murdered! Even in his blindness he gave a good account of himself; for near

his dead body was found one of his assailants whom he had seized and whirled about him as a club, beating down his cowardly foes,—cowards in attacking even the blind; for the greater wounds were in his back!"

"This is the boy coming now, isn't it?" interrupted Winwood. The gold piece he had been fingering slipped back into his pocket, and instead he pulled out a single shilling. "No one will murder him for that," he thought.

The boy came across the dry little garden and shyly mounted the steps,—a beautiful brown creature, clad only in the native loin cloth.

"Here, my boy," called Winwood. "Didn't you fan for me last night?"

The boy nodded, approached with diffidence, and accepted the silver coin which the Englishman handed him.

"Thank you, Sahib," he murmured. Winwood rose, complacent example of virtue, and moved into the hotel. The boy glanced furtively at the American: Burroughs made no move. The son of Benassad turned toward the proprietor, and looking mournfully at the shilling in his palm, he faltered:

"My mother-ver' sick. I hoped the gen'rous English—give more."

"I'm sorry, my son," the proprietor said gently. "Your mother, is she very sick?"

"It is hunger, Sahib—"

Burroughs suddenly slipped down from the railing and came toward the couple.

"Here," he said, addressing Dahlbud, "is twenty pounds,—for Shumari. Give the money to him as he needs it,—in amounts that will tempt no one."

"Sahib," began the boy, his eyes opening wide in wonder and joy.

"Don't,—don't thank me," broke in Burroughs as he turned away. "It's for the damned revolver;—my father makes them."

* * * * * * *

"My boy," remarked the proprietor after the American had disappeared, "that was a mere coincidence, upon which we cannot always count."

"Yes," replied Shumari in the native tongue, "but I think I was pretty clever with the sick mother addition."

"Very quick, my boy. I spoiled the tale myself by trying to play both the nations at once. We must be prepared with a better story. The twenty pounds we will divide as usual."

The Tenth Time*

BY MARY GERTRUDE MCNAMARA

ATE, fiddle-sticks!" scoffed Wells, who had just been divorced. "I tell you, marriage is, nine times out of ten, the result of propinquity. Fate has nothing to do with the tenth time; it's money, or social ambition, or politics, or something else of the sort. I know!"

"I'd hate to believe it," returned McKee, who was young and in love. "Anyway, it won't be so in my case."

Both looked at Sahlein, the little Jew, to all intents and purposes a happily married man.

"How about it?" said Wells. "Come now, Sahlein, tell the truth and shame the Devil."

The Jew was plainly confused.

"I will tell the truth," said he, pulling nervously at the lapels of his coat and glancing at Wells; "but it is only myself I shame." He flushed painfully as his eye met that of the youthful McKee. "I married my wife for her money—and loved her afterward," he finished limply.

"What did I tell you?" retorted Wells, triumphantly. "That illustrates the tenth time; propinquity came in at the finish."

"Don't be nasty," said McKee, unruffled, "and please remember, Sahlein's a Jew."

Just then, Pulitzer dropped in. He was a hulking, friendly fellow, radiating a vast good humor and rare good health. He gave one the impression of having been hurriedly slapped together. There was enough of him, goodness knows, but not the slightest regard had been paid to details, either by nature or by himself, or by his wife after he got her. That is why the men all liked handsome Mrs. Pulitzer, an athletic, Texas girl, as unlike her husband as day is unlike night. Pul was the same old Pul after his marriage that he was before.

He slouched along, his big, heavy trunk slightly stooped, his gorilla-like arms dangling loose.

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"I've had at least one opportunity to thank God for their length," he often remarked.

His head was massive and finely set, the abiding-place of a most wonderful intellect and a heavy shock of hair always badly in need of cutting. His eyes, usually calm, could blaze with all the wrath of the gods at that which was mean and petty. His nose was generous, his ears well-set, his mouth a trifle wide.

His clothes, he had evidently picked at random, since affinity seemed wholly lacking between coat, vest, and trousers. They were, simply and primevally, raiment. A gold-headed collar-button winked where his tie should have been.

He seated himself in the midst of his friends and stretched his great limbs to the fire.

"I'll leave it to Pul," said McKee.

"Which leads me to believe," smiled Pulitzer, folding his big, hairy hands complacently over his ample vest, "that it is something of no value."

"Then you're wrong," flashed McKee. "Let me tell you. Wells, here, scouts the idea of fate's bringing two persons together in marriage. He maintains that, nine times out of ten, it's propinquity, and the other time it's money, or ambition, or politics, or some other like invention of the Devil. What's your idea, Pul?"

Pulitzer surveyed his long arms for a moment in silence, then he looked at all three and said irrelevantly:

"Did I ever tell you how Tallifer got drowned? You remember Tallifer, Wells, of Tallifer and Gordon, real-estate brokers? Afterward, his wife managed the business under his name until she married Gordon."

"I have reason to remember Tallifer," said Wells, dryly. "He introduced me to the lady who later became my wife. I might say," he spoke to McKee, "that my curdled views on matrimony are directly attributable to Tallifer. I don't wish you to understand me, however, as conveying that the lady in question was wholly at fault. I was not then, nor am I now, an angel. Go on, Pul."

"Tallifer, as I said," Pulitzer went on, "was in the real-estate business and doing well. Then, in '98, he got an itchy foot and a hard-boiled notion that, by an adventitious combination of circumstances, he was to make his fortune in Dawson. He got, also, a fixed and foolish notion that I was essential to the perfect working of this combination—I, who didn't know a bench claim from a hole in the ground. Nevertheless, I was persuaded, for which, always, I have been both glad and sorry; glad for myself in that I came back a con-

tented, married man; sorry for Tallifer in that he lost his life.

"Well, we started in March and topped Chilcoot just in time to avoid the awful avalanche of April fourth.

" 'The combination is working like a charm,' cried Tallifer. 'If it wasn't, we'd be down there under that blanket of cobbles and snow.'

"I wasn't so sure, I was stiff and sore; galls on my shoulders and heels, a crick in my neck, a frost-bite on my nose. I longed silently for my snug quarters at the club. Tallifer offered two suggestions: that I wear a nose-muff and that we move on.

"We acted on the latter, and, it being down hill now, we made Lake Bennett in good time. We proceeded on down the lake to Caribou, where we built our boat. Then we were delayed waiting for the ice to break up.

"I still believe things would have turned out all right if we had adhered to our original combination, but Caribou offered little in the way of diversion, and Tallifer got restless. I jokingly suggested that he improve the time selling Caribou realty. That seemed to give him an idea. In about an hour, he came back with a Yukon sled and four native dogs. He'd hired the outfit from one of the mounted police.

" 'Jump in,' he said, 'I've a nice chunk of an island up the lake a bit that I'd like to show you. Elegant site for an asparagus farm, fine sandy loam; excellent market for your product among the resident caribou. If you're not unreasonable, Pul, we ought to be able to close the deal today.'

"I laughed and climbed on; I seldom could resist Tallifer in his optimism. He was as happy as a child with a new toy, and, with a song on our lips, we swung off up the lake. Tallifer handled the dogs as if all his life he'd lived under the whispering aurora borealis.

"I was enjoying myself exceedingly when, just below the island, I noticed something wrong with the men on shore. They waved their arms wildly, and, cupping their hands over their mouths, shouted hoarsely. The ice, I now observed, was growing black and sloppy.

" 'The ice isn't safe,' I said to Tallifer, 'we'd better put about.'

" 'You're talking to a real-estate man,' he replied, jauntily. 'I'm under contract to show you that island off there.'

"All this while, we were going ahead, but at a slackened pace. The men on shore now took to running along in our direction, gesticulating and shouting more wildly and hoarsely as we proceeded.

" 'Turn about, Tallifer,' I commanded, 'or I'll get off.'

"I was the heavier by thirty pounds.

" 'Just as you please,' he answered, crisply; 'but the island for me. So long!'

"I dropped off, and the sudden groaning and creaking of the ice left me prone on my face in an effort to distribute my weight.

" 'For God's sake,' I called out to the retreating Tallifer, 'turn about, man. The ice is rotten. You'll go through.'

"The Devil himself must have taken possession of Tallifer. He went on unheeding. It was only a couple of hundred yards to the island, which, for no sane reason or purpose, he stubbornly fancied he could reach in safety.

"He hadn't gone more than twenty yards or so, when, with a single—slosh! the sled broke through. The plunge into that icy water woke the real Tallifer. The sled, with the fourth and third dogs, sank almost immediately, leaving Tallifer and the other two dogs to clutch at the jagged rim of ice about them, which constantly broke off under their frenzied grasp. Tallifer's fast benumbing fingers and wrists were cruelly cut and gashed. His fearful eyes looked their terror into mine. I looked back with all the sustaining power of the soul within me. Words as a medium were beyond us.

"In the meantime, rough planks were being run out from the shore. Along them, a man cautiously slid toward Tallifer, shouting tensely, sustainingly, incoherent mouthings of encouragement. Another twenty feet or less, and—a despairing cry, two up-flung hands, a gurgle, and Mrs. Tallifer became the new member of the firm of Tallifer and Gordon.

"I turned my sickened eyes shoreward. Laboring in my direction, like a slow-moving centipede, was a sled with a hempen tail paid out by the men on shore. On it lay a tall youth, who clawed and scratched his way to me with the sheer strength of ten slim bleeding fingers. I can see him yet lift high his bloody hands, lightly and gracefully, then smile as the rope settled loosely down about my shoulders. He dared not come nearer. Slowly, I crept forward, until I grasped the runners on the sled. Those arms, my friends," Pulitzer stretched them to their nicest length, "were bridging life, and, any moment, I might miss it. I still can see the hempen tail grow taut, hear that one mad cry as the sled shot forward, feel again the warmth of returning consciousness.

"My rescuer had disappeared, seemingly as did the genie of the lamp. I hung about for a few days, fruitlessly; then I returned to Caribou.

"But this time, the ice was pretty well broken up. I pooled my luck with a couple of college lads and went on, uneventfully enough,

to Dawson. The combination never again failed me. There, as you know, I achieved my greatest happiness: I became the husband of my wife. Incidentally, I staked a bench claim, which, after all, looked most like a hole in the ground. Since then, I have been able to indulge, free from the intrusion of a single vulgar, moneyed thought, my fondness for grubby youngsters and old etchings."

Suddenly, Pul looked at his watch.

"I am due, presently, to take Mrs. Pulitzer to dinner," he said, thrusting a hand into a capacious hip-pocket and drawing out a jeweler's box of plush.

"I must hurry," he continued, opening the box and dangling before the eyes of his listeners an old-fashioned necklace of emeralds and diamonds.

"You like it?" he asked, naively, of the Jew. "I hope it pleases Mrs. Pulitzer. You see," he turned to Wells, "this is the twelfth anniversary of our marriage. Each year, I spend a great deal of thought and some money on a little token in honor of the day. Mrs. Pulitzer never wears rings." After a slight pause, he added gravely, "Her fingers are too badly scarred."

There was a moment's strained silence, while Pul replaced the trinket. Then, it was Wells who gasped:

"You don't mean to say—"

"I do," Pulitzer was smiling at McKee, "although I did not know it until after I had asked Mrs. Pulitzer to be my wife. She has been inconsistent enough to say she would never have married me had I known first it was she who saved my life and then asked her afterward to marry me. She declares, instead of its having been fateful, it would have been horribly commonplace. But I musn't keep her waiting."

"It was fate," cried McKee, with flushed face and shining eyes, as the door closed on the lumbering Pulitzer, "and I win!"

"What'll it be?" asked Wells, pressing the button.

The Pickled Picnic*

BY REX T. STOUT

YRUS Hamlin sat at his breakfast table, ostensibly reading the *Morning Clarion*, but in reality watching his son James. James was reading the *Morning News*. He was reading with an intense avidity; his eyes shone with eagerness; his cheeks were flushed with excitement. For a full week this phenomena had been regularly recurrent, and Hamlin Senior was beginning to grow uneasy. There could no longer be any doubt that something had aroused James' interest. This was incredible. James the silent, James the incompetent, James the hopeless!

James had never done anything exactly wrong. The correctness of his morals was unquestioned, nor did he seem to be without a certain ability. His university career had been, if not brilliant, at least respectable, and had led his father to entertain high hopes for the future. He had been placed in a confidential position in the office of Hamlin & Company, and the gods began to grin. His first achievement was the dumping of a fifty thousand dollar shipment into the maw of Hilton's of St. Louis, who failed for a million three days later. He next proceeded to get into a very righteous and somewhat heated argument with Captain Voorhees of the navy, which resulted in the loss of the government contract and its acquisition by Hamlin & Company's most hated rival. This—all in a single month—was too much for Hamlin Senior. More in sorrow than in anger, he ejected his son from the home offices and sent him up to the mill somewhere in Massachusetts to learn the business from the ground up.

At the mill James outdid himself. He hadn't been there a week when he discovered that the mill hands were not being treated as a twentieth century mill hand should be treated. He protested to the foreman, and was told to mind his own business. He then expressed his views—somewhat forcibly—to the superintendent, who told him that he would look into the matter, and wrote to the elder Hamlin complaining of the invidious activity of the company's heir.

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Within two days James got a letter from his father repeating the foreman's advice, with one or two added observations, unpleasantly blunt. James, far from succumbing to this show of authority, decided to manage the affair for himself, since he could get no help from the proper sources, and accordingly organized the employees into a union, arranged a strike, and proceeded with such energy that old Hamlin himself was forced to come up from New York to settle. He acceded to all the strikers' demands but one; that his own son be made superintendent.

Feeling perhaps that he had sufficiently distinguished himself for a man barely twenty-four, James, after the settlement of the strike, had allowed himself to sink into a state of innocuous desuetude. By dint of continuous application and unequalled opportunity, he became in a year the laziest man in New York, and acquired—or assumed—an attitude of utter indifference to the practical affairs of life. Indeed, this indifference reached a degree that alarmed his father almost to the point of anger. "Is it possible," thought the elder Hamlin, "that the fool is an idiot?" But having in mind the cost and outcome of James' previous efforts, he forbore to disturb the calm, and allowed himself a polite smile when James took occasion to make observations on the potential power of a dormant intellect.

Thus James developed a personality that deserved to be called the very flower, the last expression, of indifference. He was not exactly melancholy; his real lack was enthusiasm, not interest. Still, it cannot be denied that gradually he began to look and act more like a monk and less like a man than is allowable in one who is expected to perpetuate a name and an enterprise.

After this explanation, you will easily understand why Hamlin Senior felt a positive thrill when his son came to the breakfast table six mornings in succession with a springy step and a bright eye, and eagerly devoured all the newspapers in sight before he would even so much as look at his grape fruit and jelly. Clearly, there was something in the wind. The first morning, Hamlin Senior had thought little of it; it might be a murder, a race,—any one of those passing sensations that are dished up for the daily entertainment of the people. On the second morning he was mildly curious, and on the third he decided that it was unquestionably a divorce, and that James had made a somewhat late discovery of the fact of sex. But divorce suits rarely last six days, and by this time the elder Hamlin was frankly astonished.

As James sat reading the *Morning News*, an expression of firm-

ness came over his face. Hamlin Senior eyed him silently. The young man turned to the editorial page, glanced over it for a minute, then carefully folded the paper and laid it beside his plate. Then he arose, placed his hands, palms down, on the table after the manner of an orator, and said in an impressive tone:

"Father, I've decided to enter politics."

Hamlin Senior sat up straight in his chair, while the *Morning Clarion* fluttered from his hand to the floor. "Good God!" he exclaimed weakly.

James, not heeding the interruption, continued:

"Of course it is unnecessary for me to state on which side I intend to align myself. I shall be the champion of the people—the downtrodden masses—and against the base conspiracy of the bosses, of which I have been reading. The time has come when the predatory interests—"

Hamlin Senior waved a hand for silence. "James," he said, "as a father, it is my duty to tell you that you're a blamed fool. Predatory jackrabbits! What do you know about politics?"

"Enough," said James, with the air of a statesman who is considering the advisability of entering upon a dangerous war. "I assure you, enough. It is no wonder the people have been powerless to assert and maintain their rights, lacking, as they do, an able champion. I intend," he glared at his father, "I intend that they shall no longer be without one."

"And you, I suppose, are it?" asked his father.

James, being dreadfully in earnest, ignored the sarcasm. "If I am honored by being chosen as their leader, I shall not flinch," he said resolutely. "The industrial pirates must be shown that it is the people who rule. Of course, I make no allusion to your personal—er—record."

"Thank you. And what is your present ambition?"

"I shall begin in my own district, where I shall organize the masses. Reform, like charity, begins at home."

"I see. And what about the—er—the sinews?"

"Oh, as to that," said James loftily, "I shall of course expect your financial assistance."

"Of course," said the elder Hamlin, rising from his chair and starting to leave the room. "Of course—I don't think. Your damned insolence is really admirable. If you think that I—that you—if you think—" He was still sputtering with wrath when the door closed after him, leaving James standing in a Bismarckian attitude which was still very grand and solemn, despite the fact that his

only audience was a mangled grape fruit and an empty chair.

The scene between father and son was in itself really unimportant. It has been recounted in order to show the depth and strength of James' purpose, in which he could not be made to falter even by the stern refusal of an angry parent. He knew very well that the people were being exploited by selfish interests—as who does not?—and he knew also that the people, being honest, needed only honest leaders. And modest as he was, he felt pretty well assured that he could select one of the chosen without straying far afield.

He was going, he told himself, to build his campaign on the inherent good sense of the people. His disinterestedness was really astonishing. He not only said that he wanted nothing for himself—he meant it; or at least he believed that he meant it, which is perhaps as near as a human is ever allowed to approach to godliness. But the wonderful thing about it is that, for all his high-flown generalities, he kept his personal aspirations strictly within the limits of common sense.

In the course of the following week, James suffered from a series of shocks, minor, but still distressing. His was a fastidious nature, and he really had no idea that anyone but rogues could frequent some of the places into which he was led by his search for the people. The people, he found, were unbelievably elusive. In the first place, they were hard to find; and in the second, they seemed more inclined to laugh at than to listen to an exposition of their woes. Some of them even went so far as to deny that they had any.

It was about a week after the commencement of activities, in the back room of Doherty's saloon, that James met Shorty Benson. Here, at last, he found some encouragement. Shorty listened to him with flattering attention, the while he consumed uncounted schooners of beer.

"Well," said he, when James paused for breath, "that sounds mighty interestin'. You made no mistake in comin' to me. And what do you want? Th' assembly?"

James was almost angry. "No!" he shouted. "Good God! Why does everybody think I want something? I want you to understand once for all, Mr. Benson, that I am in this fight for the people! I want nothing! Assembly! Bah!"

"All right," said Shorty, soothingly. "I know it ain't much. But I thought for a starter—well, we'll talk about that later. Now to get down to business. In the first place, my name ain't Mr. Benson—it's Shorty. In the second place, there's only one guy that'll cause us any trouble—and that's Mike O'Toole. This district was mine till

he butted in two years ago. Since then there's been hell to pay. Last year he got me by three hundred."

A week previous such a statement of the case of the people would have filled James with grief and astonishment; but being hardened by a week of interviews, Shorty's picturesque language brought only a mild grimace. He thoroughly intended to make drastic reform in this respect later, but wisely decided that for the present the best thing to do was to ignore it. He tried to keep his tone from showing disapproval as he said:

"What we want to do is to let the people understand that we are on their side. We are *for* the people."

"Right-o," said Mr. Benson, into his schooner of beer.

"And," continued James, "in spite of their honesty, it must be admitted that they are ignorant. We must educate them."

"Educate hell!" roared Shorty, without thinking. Then, at the look of pained surprise on James' face, he quickly recovered. "What I meant, Mr. Hamlin, was this: you can't educate 'em. Me and Red Barber's been tryin' it for years. You got to lead 'em."

"Perhaps so," James mused thoughtfully, "perhaps so. We'll see about that later. And now, Mr.—er—Shorty, how can I get together a crowd of—say, five hundred—to talk to?"

"You can't," said Shorty decisively.

"Can't?"

"Not till they get to know you. Maybe not even then. First you got to get acquainted."

"But how?" said James helplessly. "I've been trying that for a week, and they don't seem very anxious to—get acquainted."

"Sure, that's where I'm the handy guy. Listen: come around with me for three days and nights, and you'll call every mick and dago in the district by his first name. That's the way to start. Are you on?"

James was certainly becoming cosmopolitan. He held out his hand and grasped that of Mr. Benson firmly as he said: "We'll begin tomorrow, Shorty."

The ensuing ten days were hard ones. James spent them mostly in livery stables, saloons, and barber shops, and acquitted himself with a degree of aplomb and tact that was postively impressive. By the end of the week he was ordering beers by the dozen with a charm and frequency that won universal admiration. Shorty's confidence rose by leaps and bounds, and even then found it difficult to keep pace with James' enthusiasm; for James found a fresh stock with each new adherent. His father, who had at first considered the

affair as one of James' whims, to be dismissed under his frequent and inclusive term of "damned foolishness," was surprised by this unexpected constancy into a donation to the campaign fund that was more than ample for present needs, and which bid fair to make every saloon-keeper in the district independently rich, and release the people forever from the degrading bonds of thirst.

Still, without Shorty, success would have been impossible. With all the good-will in the world, James would have found it more than difficult to establish direct communication between his philosophic principles and the people's practical desires; but with Shorty always at hand in the role of interpreter it was no task at all. True, if James could have heard Shorty's popular translations of his dearest doctrines he would have been grieved and astonished; but he didn't hear them, so there was no harm done.

By the first of June Mike O'Toole was begging for mercy. His followers were deserting him in droves; literally by the dozen. His pleadings and promises were all in vain; the combination of James' principles, Shorty's diplomacy, and free beer was too much for him, and he was barely able to hold the fort—otherwise known as district organization headquarters—with a small band of personal friends and true believers. It began to be rumored in Fourteenth Street that he was done for, and the first week in June found him fighting desperately for a foothold where he had once been king.

Despite this apparent success, however, James was far from satisfied. He was a good deal of a fool, but he saw plainly that his hold on the people was of too fluid a nature to be either sincere or enduring. He knew very well that the only right relation between the people and their leader is the ideal one which he had proposed to himself at the beginning of his career, and he knew how far short of that ideal he had fallen. This thought worried him considerably; he fell to thinking of what would have been Abraham Lincoln's opinion of this compromise with the unrighteous powers; he even felt, as did Lady Macbeth, that he was permeated with the odor of his crime,—only in his case it was nothing worse than beer. Studying the thing impartially, he was forced to admit that he had no reason to be proud of a victory won by such questionable tactics, and he resolved to purge his leadership of all taint at the earliest opportunity. He neglected, however, to say anything about it to Shorty.

The opportunity was not long in coming. It was only a day or two later that Shorty arrived fifteen minutes late for a meeting at Doherty's, with his face exhibiting the first sign of worry it had known in two weeks.

"Mr. Hamlin," he said, "it's up to you. The boys are gettin' restless. I've been waitin' for you to speak, but I guess you've forgot. We can't wait any longer. When's the blowout?"

Now, James knew very well what Shorty meant. But the increasing brusqueness of Shorty's manner was beginning to disturb his dignity. Besides, being on the edge of the Rubicon, he hesitated.

"Blowout? What do you mean?"

"Why, the picnic," said Shorty, surprised at his ignorance. "The annual. The boys are beginnin' to ask questions about it, and I don't know what to tell 'em."

"Still I fail to understand you," said James, with perverse pomposity. "Who is going to have this picnic?"

"We are," said Shorty, a little uneasily.

"Ah!" said James, with uplifted eyebrows. "At last I perceive your meaning. But you are mistaken; you take too much for granted. We are not going to have any picnic."

Only those who have either studied or participated in New York politics can appreciate the awful significance, the incredible folly, of this statement. A king can easier rule without an army or a woman without her beauty, than a district leader without his picnic. Shorty knew this; so it is no wonder that he leaped to his feet and roared:

"Good God! Are you crazy?"

"No," said James, "I am not crazy. But I am through with pandering to the low appetites of the people. I was wrong ever to begin it. My true appeal is to the intellect, and not to the senses; and in the future I shall make it there. I do not fear their disloyalty."

For a full minute Shorty was silent with horror and astonishment. Such sublime folly left him speechless. There was no doubt that James was in earnest. Never had he spoken with more firm decision. With a resolution born of despair, Shorty began to plead, cajole, and threaten; his eyes filled with tears; the foam on his schooner of beer was sadly melting away unnoticed. James was as immovable as the Rock of Ages, and refused to recede a step from his uncompromising position.

Then, suddenly, James was struck with an idea. It was more than that; it was an inspiration. He revolved it slowly in his mind, while Shorty continued his gloomy prophecy of the political future of Mr. Hamlin, and then, having decided, held up his hand for silence.

"Very well," he said, "we'll have the picnic."

"What!" gasped Shorty.

"We'll have the picnic," James repeated.

"Thank God!" said Shorty fervently. "And believe me, Mr. Hamlin, you won't regret it."

"I don't expect to," said James shortly. "And now—"

"First," Shorty interrupted, "where'll it be? There's Liebstein's Casino, and Kelly's Grove, and Murray's Bay Park, and—"

"That," said James, "I'll take care of myself. The only thing you need to be interested in is the inviting. I'll attend to everything else. Tell them to meet me at Columbia Hall on—what's the date?"

"The twenty-second. Mike O'Toole pulls his off on the twenty-ninth—that's a week from today."

"Just the thing. We'll have ours on the same day. We'll meet at Columbia Hall at 10 A.M. on Saturday the twenty-ninth."

"But—" Shorty hesitated.

"Well?"

"See here, Mr. Hamlin, why don't you let me manage this for you? They'll at least want to know where they're goin'. And what's the use of meetin' in a hall? Why not at the ferry or the station? I tell you they won't like it."

"Then they don't need to come," declared James.

"Oh, they'll come all right," said Shorty. "But I hope to God you know what you're doin'. It don't look good to me."

James arose from his chair and looked down at Shorty. "See here," he said, "I'm getting tired of your insolence. Kindly remember who I am. Now go and tell Dan Murphy that I want to see him here at once." And Shorty went.

By the following evening the district was in the midst of a hot discussion as to the probable plans for Hamlin's first annual picnic. Shorty had been in error. It was the universal opinion that the element of uncertainty—almost mystery—was so far from being obnoxious that it was a positive attraction. Many were the conjectures, and they were as wild as they were numerous. Pink Russell declared that the whole district was to be taken in automobiles to Palisades Park, which was to be rented in its entirety for the day; but though this thrilling flight of imagination was heartily applauded, it was generally believed that Pink's optimism was running away with him. Most of the guesses were much more modest, though all were agreed that, considering Mr. Hamlin's well-known generosity, almost anything might happen.

Mike O'Toole was in despair. He had decided to make one last grand effort to regain his supremacy, and his arrangements for June twenty-ninth had been advertised from one end of the district to the other as the most elaborate and wonderful ever attempted in its

history. And James, by arranging for his own outing on the same day, had killed Mike's last hope and spiked his last gun.

Shorty's entreaties for details of James' plans were in vain. If James had been trying to qualify for the title role in a clambake he couldn't have been closer-mouthed. Shorty finally gave it up in despair and fell to organizing potato races and greased pig contests.

By the morning of Saturday, June twenty-ninth, the tension had stretched almost to the breaking point. At half-past eight Columbia Hall was beginning to fill; by nine o'clock it was crowded. The air was full of suspense. Wild rumors flew around and evoked protests and applause in turn. Never before had the district been so much aroused; even the excitement of election day was nothing to this.

In the past few days the district had become definitely divided into two groups. One of these declared Pelham Bay Park to be the destination; the other, College Point. Now the dispute waged hot and furious; bets were made at odds of two to one on College Point, it being the favorite; and Tim Dorgan and Ham Keefe even went so far as to necessitate their being carried into the street to end their argument, where Pelham Bay Park, represented by Dorgan, won by a knockout in the first minute. At half-past nine the door opened to admit Shorty.

"Where is it?" yelled Dan Murphy. "Now open up, ye oyster!"

"Go t'ell!" shouted Shorty. "I know more than you do, but I don't know that."

"You're a liar!" said Murphy calmly. "You've known all along."

Shorty started for him. "Ye black-faced, yellow-backed—" but he was held back by a dozen encircling arms, whose owners insisted on his remembering that he was a gentleman in the presence of ladies, though not exactly in those terms.

At a quarter to ten the crowd, which had been merely noisy and happy, began to grow impatient. Five minutes later Shorty, in answer to a growing demand, started for the door on a hurry call for James Hamlin. He had gotten only half way from his seat when the door opened to admit James himself.

"Speakin' o' the devil," growled Murphy.

"Shut up!" said Shorty.

James was not alone. Through the door behind him came first one man, then another, then another. They grouped themselves silently at the door, then, still following James, marched solemnly onto the stage and seated themselves near its centre. James advanced to the edge of the platform and stood with one hand behind his back, the other thrust into the bosom of his coat.

By now the crowd had recovered from its surprise at the appearance of the strangers. They vaguely resented this intrusion of visitors on the district's most intimate day, but at least their leader had not disappointed them. There he was, ready to take them—God knows where. Shorty was already on his feet.

"Three cheers for Honest James Hamlin!" he shouted. The crowd responded nobly. James turned to the three strangers on the platform with a satisfied smile, then turned back to the cheering throng and raised a hand for silence.

His speech was short; so short, in fact, that it can be reproduced in its entirety:

> "Ladies, gentlemen—and children: It is needless to tell you how gratified I am by the noble manner in which you have responded to my invitation to be with me today. However sanguine were my expectations, I assure you I had no hope of seeing such a multitude as is assembled here before me. There are, I should say, at least eight hundred persons in this audience—"

"Nine hundred and sixty-five," said Shorty.

> "Thank you. Nine hundred and sixty-five persons in this audience, who have thus taken occasion to honor me and the cause I represent.
>
> "Now, I know you are all eager and curious concerning the surprise I have in store for you, and I have no desire to continue your suspense. In past years it has been the custom of leaders in this district to select a day at this season of the year and invite you to spend it with them, mostly at their expense, in amusement which, though probably innocent, is certainly neither instructive nor profitable. All this I have altered. I believe you to be honest, serious men and women, and I believe you would greatly prefer spending this day in a manner that will suit better your dignity, and increase your value, as citizens."

James paused for breath. The hall was silent—ominously silent.

> "I have therefore arranged for a program which I am sure will meet with your enthusiastic approval. First, Mr. Henry Hightower, of Philadelphia, will address you on 'The Power of the Individual in Politics;' second, Mr. John Clay Brown will deliver his famous lecture on 'Honest Government: Why Not?'; third, Professor Carlton Carlisle, of Columbia University, will talk about 'Self-Reliance as a Power for Good'; and lastly, I myself shall have a few words to say about the future welfare of the district.
>
> "One thing more: owing to the length of the speeches, there will be an intermission of one hour between the second and the third. This hour will be spent in the consumption of a little refreshment for which I have arranged, and in the promotion of good fellowship among us all.
>
> "I now have the honor to introduce to you Mr. Henry Hightower, of Philadelphia."

At the conclusion of this remarkable speech the feelings of the district, in Columbia Hall assembled, can hardly be imagined; they certainly cannot be described. Uppermost were wild rage, blind